UK Military Personnel and their Romantic Relationships
The Impact of the Recent Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan

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UK MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: THE IMPACT OF THE RECENT CONFLICTS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the UK military and their romantic relationships, in the context of recent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. A mixed methods approach is used and the thesis separated into two sections. The quantitative section comprises four studies examining: the distribution of relationship status, a comparison with the general population of England and Wales; the prevalence of relationship difficulties and associations with socio-demographic, military, and deployment-related experiences; and possible mediation effects of mental health symptoms and alcohol misuse on relationship difficulties. The qualitative section includes a study giving a deep experiential understanding of how UK military personnel manage their romantic relationships in the context of their military careers.

Quantitative data came from the second phase of a longitudinal cohort study of UK military personnel, collected via a postal survey questionnaire (n= 9984). The sample for the qualitative study was drawn from this cohort study and included in-depth interviews with six male married Army personnel purposively selected for the study.

Key findings from this thesis indicate that childhood adversity and being in unmarried relationships are the main factors associated with relationship difficulties. Resiliency in the relationships of UK military personnel can be enhanced with support from and for spouses, financial security, and having a securely attached relationship. Recommendations for future research and implications for policy and interventions are discussed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. A health outcome measure assessing for alcohol misuse
CI	95% Confidence Interval
CO	Commissioned Officer: A military rank of the highest authority deriving authority directly from a sovereign power. This rank is gained through Direct Entry (DE Officers) via officers training, or Late Entry (LE Officers) having been commissioned from senior NCO ranks. DE and LE Officers often work in different roles. CO ranks include Field Marshal, General, Brigadier, and Major.
DASA	The UK Ministry of Defence Analytical Services and Advice (now called Defence Statistics)
DSW	Divorced, Separated, or Widowed
GHQ-12	12 item General Health Questionnaire. A health outcome measure of general mental health problems
GT	Grounded Theory
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KCMHR	King's Centre for Military Health Research
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MODREC	Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee
MOR	Multinomial Odds Ratio
n	Sample size
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer. A military rank with some degree of authority. This rank is gained through promotion from within the non-officer ranks. NCO ranks include corporal, sergeant, and warrant officer
OR	Odds Ratio

PCL-C	Post-traumatic stress disorder checklist
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAF	Royal Air Force
RN	Royal Navy, including Royal Marines
STATA	Data analysis and statistical software
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organisation
95% CI	95 per cent confidence interval
%	Per cent

TERMINOLOGY

Active component/Active duty	US equivalent of regular personnel of the UK Armed Forces
Engagement type	Service in the UK Armed Forces as a regular or reserve personnel
Enlisted	In the US, enlisted ranks are those lower than Officer, including the equivalent of Non-Commissioned Officers
Ex-service personnel	Those who have left the Armed Forces
Married accompanied	Military personnel who live with their married partner usually in military accommodation or private accommodation within the local area of the barracks
Married unaccompanied	Military personnel who live on the barracks in single accommodation and their married partner lives in a different location normally their home town only seeing each other at weekends and holidays
National Guard (NG)	A reserve military force in the US similar to the UK reserve force. The majority have full time jobs while serving part time as a National Guard member. The National Guard are part of the US reserve component
Operation Desert Storm	United States codename for part of the Gulf War. Operation Desert Storm (17th January 1991 – 28th February 1991) was a United Nations authorised war of coalition forces from 34 nations led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait
Op HERRICK	The UK military codename for operations in Afghanistan
Op TELIC	The UK military codename for operations in Iraq
Other ranks	Ranks below NCO. Other ranks includes Able Seaman in the Royal Navy, Private in the Army and Royal Marines and Aircraftman in the RAF

Patch	The patch is a colloquial term used by UK military personnel in reference to the residential area within a military barracks or garrison where married accompanied personnel live
Regular personnel	Regular personnel are employed by the military in a full-time capacity rather than as a reserve
Reserve personnel	Reserve personnel are individuals who work for the military in their spare time, and who may have civilian employment in addition to their military duties
Romantic relationships	Married, co-habiting, and long term non-cohabiting relationships
Veterans	Ex-service personnel, those who have left the Armed Forces

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

My thesis is part of a series of studies being conducted at the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London, where I have been enrolled for completion of my PhD. I was not involved in the design, ethics, or data collection of the KCMHR military health study. For completion of my PhD the quantitative section used data collected as part of the KCMHR military health study, however, I planned all studies, cleaned and checked the data, and conducted all analyses. The qualitative section included participants who were recruited through the KCMHR military health study however, I designed the study, submitted the ethics amendment and gained ethical approval, and collected and analysed the data. All work undertaken as part of my thesis was supervised by Dr Nicola Fear and Professor Sir Simon Wessley, with the additional support of Professor Christopher Dandeker for the qualitative study.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Mary Keeling carried out the drafting and preparation of this thesis under the supervision of Dr Nicola Fear. Dr Nicola Fear and Professor Sir Simon Wessely read and commented on the entire draft. Professor Christopher Dandeker read and commented on chapters 10, 11, and 12 (the qualitative section).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter presents a review of the existing literature investigating the romantic relationships of military personnel that was published up to and including the year 2010 (when the review was conducted). This literature review was conducted using a methodical approach searching Ovid databases (Embase, PsychINFO, Medline, PsychARTICLES and google scholar) using broad search terms (marriage/relationships/spouses/wives/partners/co-habiting/divorce and military/ Armed Forces/Army/Navy/Royal Air Force/Air Force/reserves/National Guard/military personnel/soldiers); the review, however, was not systematic. The literature review helped inform the focus of my thesis and direct the quantitative analysis and design of the qualitative study. The review includes: 1) why the relationships of military personnel may be at risk of experiencing difficulties, 2) literature investigating the prevalence of divorce rates and marital status between military and civilian populations, 3) literature investigating military life and the potential impact on romantic relationships, 4) literature investigating the impact of deployment on relationships, and 5) literature applying attachment theory to examine and understand the impact of deployment separations. The limitations of the research are presented which form the basis of the rationale for this thesis. Thesis objectives and aims are presented, followed by an overview of the structure.

Why the relationships of military personnel may be at risk of experiencing difficulties?

Since military operations began in Iraq (2003) and Afghanistan (2001), there have been increased demands placed on UK military personnel. Concern has been raised in the United States (US) about increases in marital difficulties and divorce rates since the start of these conflicts. Although these concerns are not supported by divorce figures (Karney & Crown, 2007), the impact of military lifestyle on romantic relationships remains an important topic. Research suggests negative relationships with spouses can lead to military personnel developing mental health difficulties which can affect their ability to complete their job and discourages them from re-enlisting (Hoge, Castro, & Eaton, 2006). Personal relationships and contact with family and friends is also crucial for providing support (Greene, Buckman, Dandeker, & Greenberg, 2010).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) conducted a review of the work/family conflict literature and proposed that work/family conflict has three forms 1) time-based conflict, 2) strain-based conflict, and 3) behavior-based conflict. Each form may lead to work/family conflict if either 1) the time devoted, 2) the strain from participation, and/or 3) the specific behaviours, required by a role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another. Employment patterns found in both military and civilian jobs, such as shift work, long hours, regular work enforced separations, and relocations, including to overseas destinations, fit with all three forms of conflict and are likely to impact on personal well-being, family stress, and relationship functioning (Orthner & Rose, 2009). Although some of these characteristics feature in civilian jobs, all of them are present in military jobs and may occur concurrently.

Unlike civilian jobs, compliance with military work demands is often not optional for military personnel (Segal, 1986). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) propose that work/family conflict is intensified when there are negative repercussions for non-compliance with role demands. Furthermore, deployments include the risk of serious injury or death to the deployed military personnel which may exacerbate the strain of the separation (Busuttil & Busuttil, 2001). Consequently, it seems appropriate to presume that military life would have a negative impact on romantic relationships.

Segal (1986) described both the military and family as "greedy institutions" highlighting the competing demands of military work and spouse needs. The term "greedy institution" is used to describe organisations or groups who seek exclusive and undivided loyalty. "Greedy institutions" exercise pressures on group members to have weak or no ties with other institutions or persons that may cause conflict with the organisations' own needs and demands. The effective running of military organisations requires large commitments of time and energy, and the potentially death. This inevitably will conflict with family demands.

Conflict is likely to occur when work interferes with family members' ability to be emotionally committed, display affection, identify with the family unit, and fulfill role obligations, as normatively expected by the family. Conflict between these two "greedy institutions" will be exacerbated in situations when the family is greedy or if work is so greedy it interferes with the ability to fulfill relatively minimal family demands (Segal, 1986). Military personnel with children may be more likely to experience increased conflict as children create a further familial demand. This is

especially true during deployment separation when the spouse left behind must take on the role of single parent (Medway, Davis, Cafferty, Chappell, & O'Hearn, 1995).

Difficulties meeting the demands of different roles is suggested to be the result of having a finite amount of role resources; when a large proportion of resources are used in one role, there is not enough left to meet the needs of another (Goode, 1960; Voydanoff, 1988). This is likely to be exacerbated in the context of military life, when control over demand is limited and separations from spouses/partners are frequent. Burrell, Adams, Duran, and Castro (2006) adopted the framework produced by Segal (1986) to examine four military lifestyle demands (risk of service member injury or death, frequent relocations, periodic separations, and foreign residence) and their impact on US Army spouses. They found that all of these military work demands were related to spousal well-being, attitudes to the Army, and personal adjustment, as well as to soldier well-being, morale and retention.

On the contrary, it is proposed that couples with good coping ability and resources are often able to deal with additional life stressors and even strengthen their relationships (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Further to coping ability, expansion and role quality theories (Barnett & Hyde, 2001) suggest work demands may not negatively impact on family where there is a high level of work satisfaction. Perceiving work to be satisfying, even when job demand is high, can positively impact on, and provide more energy for use in, other areas of life such as romantic relationships.

Coping ability and job satisfaction have been shown to be key resiliency factors for the families of Israeli military personnel. Drawing on the work of Segal (1986),

Desivilya and Gal (1996) conducted research investigating the patterns of coping of servicemen's families in the context of the competing demands of military and family life. They used data from both military personnel and their spouse to examine the couple's joint coping resources and skills. This investigation identified two categories of families: well-adjusted families and un-reconciled families (unable to reconcile the competing demands of military and family). Key features of well-adjusted families include high job satisfaction, having identified family coping strategies such as using extended family and organizational support, instrumental coping such as agreed levels of responsibility for household chores and childcare, and spouses reporting good personal coping potential.

There are many factors of military life that may impact on romantic relationships. The key areas of research examining the impact of military life on romantic relationships tend to be investigations of:

- Divorce rates and comparisons between civilian and military populations
- The potential impact of military life on relationships
    - The impact of deployment:
        - Comparisons of those who have and have not been deployed
        - Deployment length
        - Impact on wives at home
        - Combat exposure
            - and related mental health symptoms
        - Post-deployment readjustment
        - Impact on reserve personnel
        - Attachment theory and deployment separation

The remainder of this introduction chapter will examine each area of the current literature before discussing limitations and the rationale for this thesis.

Marital status and divorce rates in the military

A wealth of research indicates that military personnel are more likely to be married than age matched civilians (Cadigan, 2000; Pollard, Karney, & Loughran, 2008) and military personnel are more likely to marry at a younger age (Adler-Baeder, Pittman, & Taylor, 2006; Karney & Crown, 2007; Lundquist, 2008; Hogan & Seifert, 2010). It is proposed that younger age at marriage is more likely in military populations due to job and financial security creating a stable socio-economic position and incentives such as subsidised housing and the supportive environment (Cadigan, 2000; Lundquist, 2008). Such incentives may lead to marriage happening prematurely or even inducing marriages in partnerships that may have otherwise dissolved (Karney & Crown, 2007; Lundquist, 2008).

Using the 2005 American Community Survey, Hogan and Seifert (2010) examined whether military service increases the likelihood of marriage. They compared marriage and divorce rates of 23 to 25 year olds who had and had not served in the US Armed Forces on active duty (active duty refers to a full-time occupation as part of a military force, in the UK these are regular personnel, opposed to reserve personnel) for two years or more while controlling for demographic variables. The results from this comparison showed that the proportion of married personnel is higher among those who have served on active duty than among those who have not served. Hogan and Seifert (2010) proposed that this provides evidence for the military

compensation and benefits system and policies for married personnel inducing single members to marry earlier than they otherwise might.

Although research from the US indicates that military divorce rates are either lower or similar to civilians (McCone & O'Donnell, 2006; Karney & Crown, 2007; Pollard, et al., 2008), both UK and US media have reported concerns that the divorce rates of military personnel have risen over time. In the UK, BBC news reported in 2000 that divorce rates in the Armed Forces doubled that of civilians, according to research by a political party, who also claimed that divorce rates had risen dramatically in the last 10 years (BBC News, 2000). In the US, WRAL, a local news website in North Carolina, reported that increases in military deployments were causing more divorces in military families, with military divorce up by 40 per cent since 2000 (Buscher, 2005). Pollard, Karney, and Loughran (2008) report that not only is the media raising concern, spouses of military personnel are also concerned. They suggest that spouses' concerns have grown from beliefs that military families are more vulnerable than comparable civilians. When examining US military personnel under the age of 25 years, divorce rates are higher than age matched civilians (Adler-Baeder, et al., 2006; Hogan & Seifert, 2010).

Lundquist (2008) conducted research using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in the US and found that when investigating 23 to 27 year olds, enlisted personnel (in the US enlisted personnel are all ranks below commissioned officer) are more likely to divorce than comparable civilians, even after controlling for demographic, religious, socioeconomic, and attitudinal factors. In their comparisons using the 2005 American Community Survey, Hogan and Seifert (2010) also found

that active duty Armed Forces members who marry early have higher divorce rates compared those who have not served on active duty.

US military women are more likely to be divorced compared to military men; this has been attributed to the additional challenge of work/family conflict that women may experience (Segal & Segal, 2004; Adler-Baeder, et al., 2006; McCone & O'Donnell, 2006). Pollard et al. (2008) showed that military men and women are more likely to be married and military women are more likely to be divorced while serving in the military compared to civilians. Once they had left service, male and female veterans had higher divorce rates than comparable civilians. Pollard et al. (2008) concluded that these results suggest the military provides incentives to marry and remain married but upon exiting military service, the incentives ceasing, ex-military personnel experience higher divorce rates.

Pollard et al. (2008) and Hogan and Seifert's (2010) findings provide evidence to support the hypothesis that the benefits of financial and job stability and being in a supportive environment, provided by military service, buffer accelerated and fragile relationships from ending. But once they leave service and the benefits cease, their relationships are more vulnerable and more likely to dissolve.

This hypothesis is inconsistent with the results from Lundquist's (2008) comparison of enlisted personnel who formed their marriage prior to joining the military with enlisted personnel whose marriages formed during military service. This showed that there was no difference between divorce likelihood in the two groups. Pre-service marriages can be assumed to have begun in the absence of the military compensations

and benefits that might induce premature and therefore weak marriages. Consequently, this finding suggests that the higher prevalence of divorce in young military personnel is not attributable to the benefits and compensations inducing marriage decisions. Lundquist (2008) concludes that the increased divorce rates in younger military personnel may be consequential to the greater stress of military life, particularly in the context of younger less experienced personnel and newer marital bonds that are likely to be less stable.

Adler-Beader, Pittman, and Taylor (2006) conducted research investigating marriage, divorce and remarriage in the US military. They highlight that remarriage (second marriages) has been largely overlooked when investigating divorce in military populations and may affect reporting of marriage and divorce rates. Their research indicates that proportions of those who have divorced and entered a second marriage are greater than the US general population. This research indicates that when considering remarriage, the rates of divorce are higher than previously believed for all areas of the military not just those who are younger. This supports the notion that higher divorce rates are not only attributable to the accelerated marriage decisions based on the military benefits, but may also be due to the stress and strain of military life. Adler-Beader et al. (2006) do, however, propose that one reason for the high rates of remarriage in the military may be due to the benefits available to married military personnel.

The reported research discussing divorce rates examines data from several different periods in time and does not focus predominantly on the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the UK, military personnel started being deployed to Afghanistan in

2001 and to Iraq in 2003. Since this period, there has been a steady increase in the amount of personnel deployed with many personnel being sent on repeated deployments (Rona et al., 2007; Fear et al., 2010; Buckman et al., 2011). Karney and Crown (2007) conducted investigations of US military divorce rates over a ten year period (beginning 1996 to the end of 2005), with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Karney and Crown (2007) suggest that colloquial and media beliefs, that deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan increase military divorce rates, may be due to assumptions derived from the "stress hypothesis". The "stress hypothesis" assumes that the stress associated with long and frequent operational deployments such as anxiety about loved ones, financial strains, and challenges communicating, to name a few, interferes with spouses' abilities to maintain their relationship during and following deployment. Karney and Crown (2007) report that the results from their investigation and results from a wealth of other existing research from the US does not support this idea. The broad results from their research show limited evidence to suggest that the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were associated with any increase in divorce rates.

Karney and Crown (2007) raise the importance of considering the "enduring traits" of military personnel when examining the impact of military life on their relationships. Factors such as previous socio-economic background, childhood adversity, lower educational attainment, and other personal factors are known to impact on relationship functioning and should be considered. Research conducted by Wilson and Stuchbury (2010) investigating the general population suggests there are several socio-demographic characteristics associated with an increased risk of relationship dissolution. They include being younger, cohabiting but not married, not having

dependent children, having low educational attainment, being of a low social class, and having previous marriage dissolution.

Karney and Crown (2007) highlight the possibility that many military personnel in the US are already at an increased risk of experiencing relationship problems due to their enduring traits, as they tend to be younger, with lower educational attainment, and from lower socio-economic backgrounds. What is, therefore, interesting is the extent to which military life impacts on relationships and how existing vulnerabilities might be exacerbated in the context of the extra strains of military life. In the UK, Iversen et al. (2007) report that the prevalence of childhood adversity in the UK military is relatively high and is associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing mental health difficulties. Iversen et al. (2007) also report that the UK military has historically actively recruited from lower socio-economic areas, which may increase the vulnerability of some military personnel.

Despite the possible pre-existing vulnerabilities, there is evidence to indicate that some aspects of military life may have a negative impact on the relationships of military personnel. Research investigating the prevalence of divorce in military populations however, presents a contradictory picture. As Karney and Crown (2007) propose, to look purely at divorce rates is likely to be misleading and limited. Additionally, investigations should consider the impact on relationship functioning and satisfaction.

Military life and the potential impact on romantic relationships

There are certain aspects to military life that make it distinct from the experiences of civilians and which may impact on romantic relationships. As discussed previously, military work places demands on military personnel that have an impact on how they live their lives, such as relocations, sometimes to different countries, long working hours, and time away from home for training and operational deployments. Furthermore, these demands are not optional or negotiable (Segal, 1986; Dandeker, French, Birtles, & Wessely, 2006).

Segal (1986) highlights the key areas of military life that make it both greedy and arguably distinct from civilian life. Segal (1986) suggests that the risk of injury or death associated with the work of military personnel is the greediest aspect of the military with the largest potential for negative impact on military personnel's, their spouses', and families' lives. Geographical relocation is a further greedy aspect of military life highlighted by Segal (1986) and by other researchers (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003; Karney & Crown, 2007).

In the UK, military personnel are entitled to receive a Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) which helps to compensate for higher cost of living in overseas countries and for changes to lifestyle as a result of local conditions. UK military personnel are also entitled to a Disturbance Allowance (DA) when they are asked to move to a new long term assignment (Ministry of Defence, 2010). Despite these financial allowances, relocations of military personnel, the spouse, and family may have a negative impact on their lives and their relationships. Having to frequently relocate either within the UK or to overseas locations requires leaving behind family and friends who may be

crucial for support and having to re-establish life and support networks. For the non-serving military spouse, they may also have to sacrifice their own career with the potential additional impact on finances (Segal, 1986; Drummet, et al., 2003). Although frequent relocations are likely to cause upheaval to the relationships and family life of military personnel, the opportunity to travel and live in a foreign country has been reported by some military spouses as being a positive aspect of military life (Segal, 1986; Dandeker, et al., 2006).

The military has its own unique culture with explicit rules and regulations as well as a clearly defined hierarchy. In joining the military new recruits choose to take on the culture of the military and become immersed within it (Christian, Stivers, & Sammons, 2009). The military has a collectivist culture, meaning new recruits are taught to subordinate the self to the group, always putting the needs of the military before their own (Hockey, 1986; Christian, et al., 2009). This collectivism can be understood as another greedy aspect of the military as it infiltrates in to all domains of life. The collectivist nature of the military is likely to create conflict with romantic relationships, especially in situations where the non-military spouse is unable to understand or respect the cultural demands of military life (Segal, 1986). This is likely to be exacerbated by the military's regulation over emotional expression due to the highly masculine soldier identity, emotional strength, and hardiness needed for occupational effectiveness (Christian, et al., 2009; Green, Emslie, O'Neill, Hunt, & Walker, 2010).

Further cultural aspects of military life that may negatively impact military personnel's relationships are the normative constraints. These are the expectations of

behaviour and involvement in military life placed not only on the military member but also their spouse and immediate family (Segal, 1986). Family members carry the rank of the service member and, therefore, must behave accordingly. This often includes an expectation that spouses should take part in social functions, not only attendance but also preparations, and volunteer for other military social life orientated activities (Segal, 1986). For some, these normative constraints may be a positive aspect of life providing the non-military spouse with a sense of belonging, purpose and peer support. For others, however, they may be perceived as unwanted obligations that interfere with other aspects of life, such as personal careers and may exacerbate any work/family conflict (Segal, 1986). It is probable that these normative constraints are lesser for the spouses of those military personnel who serve as married unaccompanied, where the non-military spouse lives away from barracks in a separate location, usually their home town.

Deployment and the potential impact on romantic relationships

Newby et al. (2005) asked US active duty Army personnel who had recently been on an operational deployment to Bosnia if they had experienced positive and negative consequences of deployment. They found that 77.0% of the 951 deployed soldiers reported positive consequences of the deployment and 63.0% reported negative consequences. 46.9% of the soldiers reported both positive and negative consequences. Single soldiers were more likely than married soldiers to report positive consequences, and married soldiers were more likely than single soldiers to report negative consequences.

The main positive consequence reported by both single and married soldiers was the additional money they gained (in both the US (Newby, et al., 2005) and the UK (Ministry of Defence, 2010) military personnel receive additional pay during operational deployments). Single soldiers also frequently reported self-improvement as a positive consequence and married personnel reported improvement in their marital relationship (Newby, et al., 2005). The most commonly reported negative consequence by both single and married soldiers was chain of command issues. For married soldiers the next most pertinent negative consequences were time away from family/missing important events and the deterioration of their marital relationship. Married soldiers were also more likely to report having mismanaged or lost money during deployment (Newby, et al., 2005).

The results from Newby et al.'s (2005) research indicate that deployment can be experienced as positive and/or negative. Whereas some soldiers report that deployment separation has improved their relationship with their spouse, others report that deployment separation has led to the deterioration of their relationship. Of note, time away from family and missing important events is the most pertinent negative factor for married soldiers.

Schumm, Bell and Gade (2000) investigated a US peacekeeping unit composed of reserve personnel, sent for a 6 month overseas deployment in 1994. The soldiers were away from home for at least nine months including time away for training pre-deployment. Data was gathered at four time points; before joining the unit, pre-deployment, during deployment, and post-deployment. Participants provided responses on measures of both marital satisfaction (a broad measure of happiness

with the relationship; very unhappy to very happy) and marital quality (a measure of trust, communication, support, and ability to handle conflict), and data on marital stability and military retention were also collected. For those who remained married over the four time points, satisfaction and quality were not shown to change overall as a result of deployment. During deployment, responses on the marital satisfaction measure did, however, change with some participants reporting being less happy with their relationship.

Schumm, et al. (2000) propose that deployment separation may decrease marital satisfaction at that specific point in time, but marital quality reports remain the same as they provide a global evaluation of the relationship. Although separations are challenging, deployment does not have a permanent effect on relationships. Investigations of relationship stability across the four time points, indicates that those who had relationship problems prior to deployment were more likely to report problems and instability post-deployment.

More recently, McLeland, Sutton, and Schumm (2008) tested the stress hypothesis highlighted by Karney and Crown (2007) (discussed previously, page 30) by investigating marital satisfaction across groups of civilians, non-deployed military personnel, military personnel on alert and waiting to deploy, currently deployed personnel, and personnel recently returned from deployment, in the context of deployments between 2005-2006. Compared to the "baseline" values of those participants not involved in a military deployment, service members anticipating or returned from a deployment report lower marital satisfaction scores. McLeland, et al. (2008) suggest these findings lend some evidence to the stress hypothesis which

predicts that separations from loved ones may effect levels of satisfaction with those relationships.

The findings from McLeland et al. (2008) indicate lower relationship satisfaction pre- and post-deployment rather than during the actual separation. This is in contradiction to the findings from Schumm et al. (2000) that satisfaction levels tend to fall during the separation but broadly marital quality remains the same throughout and satisfaction broadly returns to pre-deployment levels following deployment. One reason for this incongruence between the two studies could be that McLeland et al. (2008) do not assess within subjects baselines of pre-deployment versus post-deployment satisfaction whereas Schumm et al. (2000) do. In doing so Schumm et al. (2000) were able to show that pre-deployment problems were predictive of post-deployment problems. McLeland, et al. (2008), however, only make comparisons across different groups of people, those who have not been deployed, those awaiting, those currently mobilised, and those returned. These between subject's comparisons may be misleading; it is not possible to know if any differences are due to the effect of the stages of deployment or differences across the groups.

Results from Newby et al. (2005), Schumm, et al. (2000), and McLeland, et al. (2008) provide evidence that operational deployments may have a negative impact on the romantic relationships of some US military personnel but not for all. It is possible that looking crudely at deployment per se is misleading (Karney & Crown, 2007). The remainder of this section will examine current literature investigating specific factors of deployment and associations with relationships.

Deployment length and extensions

Deployment separations are likely to create a challenge for both the deployed military personnel and their spouse left behind. It may, therefore, be presumed that when the length of deployment is increased, from what is expected, these challenges are exacerbated and more likely to result in relationship difficulties. Steelfisher, Zaslavsky, and Blendon (2008) investigated the impact of deployment extensions on the spouses of deployed US military personnel. They found that deployment extension was associated with spousal mental health problems, problems communicating with their deployed military partner, difficulties maintaining their own job, and being dissatisfied with the Army. Steelfisher et al. (2008) concluded that deployment extension exacerbates existing deployment-related challenges. They did not find associations between deployment extension and weakened marriages. Of note, the independent variable measuring deployment extension was based on a self-report response from the spouse that their husband's deployment was longer than initially expected.

Orther and Rose (2009) investigated the impact of deployment on the spouses of US military personnel. They report that when military personnel are deployed for 12 months in a three year period, spouses report a decline in psychological health. If military personnel are deployed for 18 months or more in three years, spouses report an even greater decline. This is consistent with the results from Steelfisher et al. (2008) and further indicates that although deployment extension may not be directly linked to relationship difficulties, it does exacerbate the challenges related to deployment separation.

In the UK, the Ministry of Defence produced Harmony Guidelines (NAO, 2006) that recommend an upper limit for the total number of months military personnel should deploy in a three year period. For the UK Army an upper limit of 13 months in a 3 year period is recommended. This would mean no more than two deployments in this time as an average deployment is six months. Rona et al. (2007) conducted research with UK military personnel from all services, but using the Army Harmony Guideline of 13 months, to investigate the effect of duration of deployment on military personnel's psychological, physical, and relationship health. They found that deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period was consistently associated with reporting problems at home both during and following deployment. Despite the consistent association, the effect size was small and reduced when adjusting for role in theatre, time spent in a forward area and type of deployment. They did, however, report moderate associations between psychological symptoms and deploying for 13 months or more in three years.

Rona et al.'s (2007) results add to the research of Steelfisher et al. (2008) and Orthner and Rose (2009) by demonstrating that longer deployment exacerbates the challenges of deployment for the military personnel. These results indicate that further investigation into the effect of deployment length is warranted. This should include a further look at the possible impact of deployment length and repeat deployments on relationship stability and satisfaction directly.

Impact on wives at home

As is evident in the literature regarding deployment length, a large proportion of research investigating the impact of deployment on the relationships of military

personnel tends to examine the impact on the wives and partners left behind. Deployment separations mean the spouse at home must cope with daily responsibilities on their own, whilst coping with being separated from their partner who is away in a potentially hostile and dangerous environment (Busuttil & Busuttil, 2001). The main stressors for wives during deployments are assuming the role of single parent (if they have children), financial difficulties, home and car repairs, and children's behavioural and emotional problems (Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995; Wheeler & Torres Stone, 2010). These stressors may lead to feelings of loneliness (Wood, et al., 1995), anger, and depression (Eaton et al., 2008).

Eaton et al. (2008) report that among spouses of US Army soldiers presenting at primary care clinics, 6.7% had diagnosable depression, 7.2% generalised anxiety disorder, and 4.3% used alcohol in the last 4 weeks more than they would have liked to. When husbands are deployed for 11 months or more the prevalence increases further (Mansfield et al., 2010). In the UK Dandeker, French, Birtles and Wessely (2006) conducted face to face interviews with 50 British Army wives during and post-deployment, and collected questionnaire data from both husbands and wives during deployment. Their results indicate that over half of the wives thought their marital relationship was negatively affected by their husband being in the military. Main reasons for this were long periods of separation and their husband missing special family occasions.

Deployment separation was reported as the main cause of work/life tension by the wives in Dandeker et al.'s (2006) study. Wives reported negative consequences of deployment separation to include lack of regular contact with deployed spouse,

loneliness, difficulty comforting children and explaining their father's absence, difficulty running the home alone, and dealing with finances. Despite reporting negative consequences, the wives generally did not think deployment alone had a detrimental effect on their marriage and 83% wished their husband to remain in the Armed forces, with a main reason being the financial security (Dandeker, et al., 2006). Despite the challenges of military life, the financial gains of military service may outweigh the negative impact for some wives.

Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, and Weiss (2008) report that wives who are young, newly married, financially unstable, and experiencing their first deployment find it more difficult to adapt. Gabardella (2008), however, found that wives who learnt new skills and achieved a sense of independence had a positive experience, as the separation enhanced their ability to manage and cope. Busuttil and Busuttil (2001) report that certain patterns of coping and behaviour play a central role in determining the impact on marital relationships. They cite research by Pearlman (1970) to support claims that wives who were able to adapt and take on a dual parental role with increased independence and responsibility experienced successful separations.

Combat exposure

Research focusing on the impact of deployment on relationships from the military personnel's perspective is sparse compared to that investigating the impact on the spouses. Research that has examined military personnel and their relationships tends to focus on the impact of combat exposure. Ruger, Wilson, and Waddoups (2002) examined the impact of military service on marital duration with a specific interest on combat. The data covered military service periods spanning World War 2, the Korean

War and Vietnam. Analysis indicated that consistently across all wars, combat increased the hazard rate of marriage ending by 62%.

Gimbel and Booth (1994) conducted research investigating Vietnam veterans via retrospective questionnaire data. They found that combat exposure was positively associated with marital adversity, and pre-military early emotional problems and problems at school played an important role in the quality and stability of marriages. The presence of stress symptoms and adult antisocial behaviour (i.e. ever been arrested, been in a fight and used a weapon, had a house repossessed) was added to their analysis and showed that adult antisocial behaviour is the key factor increasing the likelihood of marital problems in those with combat histories. When controlling for stress symptoms and antisocial behaviour, combat does not have a direct association with marital adversity. They conclude that combat increases stress symptoms and/or antisocial behaviour that lead to marital adversity. This is exacerbated in individuals who reported pre-military emotional or school problems. Adult antisocial behaviour was the only factor found to have a direct link with marital adversity (Gimbel & Booth, 1994).

Gimbel and Booth's (1994) research indicates that looking at combat in isolation as Ruger et al. (2002) did, may be misleading. It seems that there may be other factors at play that need to be considered when examining the impact of combat exposure on relationships.

Deployment, combat exposure, and mental health

Recent research investigating the romantic relationships of the military has tended to look at the links between deployment, often with a specific focus on combat exposure, and mental health symptoms and romantic relationships. Allen, Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman (2010) collected data from 434 couples (US active duty husbands married to civilian wives) enrolled on a marriage education workshop. Compared to those who had not deployed, having been deployed did not affect marriage functioning. Of the couples where the husband had deployed, husband's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms were associated with marriage functioning. Mediation analysis indicated that recent deployment was associated with marriage functioning indirectly through husbands' PTSD symptoms.

Allen et al.'s (2010) findings are similar to those reported by Renshaw, Rodrigues, and Jones (2009). Renshaw et al. (2009) collected data from National Guard soldiers (equivalent of UK reserve forces) recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2005. They found that combat exposure was not directly associated with marital satisfaction, however, PTSD and depressive symptoms were. They concluded that combat exposure was indirectly associated with marital satisfaction through symptoms of PTSD and depressive symptoms.

Meis, Erbes, Polusny, and Compton (2010) examined how other correlates of PTSD may impact on associations between combat, PTSD, and romantic relationships. Negative emotionality is a tendency to experience negative emotional states such as anxiety or irritability and to react poorly to stress, regardless of trauma experiences. Negative emotionality may predispose individuals to PTSD and have implications for

relationship functioning (Meis, et al., 2010). Meis et al. (2010) investigated how negative emotionality impacted associations between combat exposure, PTSD, and relationship problems. They found that negative emotionality predisposed combat exposed military personnel to more severe PTSD, in turn contributing to poorer relationship quality.

These studies provide a good base of evidence indicating that although deployment and combat exposure may not directly impact on the romantic relationships of military personnel, for those with PTSD symptoms, their relationships may be at risk of experiencing difficulties. Ray and Vanstone (2009) conducted interviews with 10 peacekeeping veterans who were receiving treatment for PTSD to investigate how family relationships are affected by PTSD and how family relationships affect the healing process. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the interviews indicated that emotional numbing and anger associated with PTSD impact on family relationships and emotional withdrawal away from family support creates a struggle with healing from the trauma.

Readjustment post-deployment

Further to the potential disruption to relationships during separation, the process of readjusting post-deployment can also cause relationship difficulties. A wealth of research indicates that upon return from an operational deployment, the soldier and their partner must renegotiate and re-define their roles, routines, and boundaries. Failure to do so can result in profound relationship difficulties (Rosen, Durand, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1995; Wood, et al., 1995; Bowling & Sherman, 2008; Faber, et al., 2008; Reger & Moore, 2009).

Rosen et al. (1995) investigated the marital adjustment of spouses of Army personnel who had been deployed as part of Operation Desert Storm (1991 Gulf War). They found that, when soldiers returned from deployment wives would often distance themselves from their returned spouse. Rosen et al. (1995) suggested that the wives rejecting behaviour was an indication of them finding it hard to accept the returned husband back into their lives and routines. This is consistent with Vormbrock (1993) who proposes that some wives struggle to accept their returning husband back into the home as they attempt to defend their new found independence.

During deployment separations, spouses must manage independently without assistance from their partners. As discussed previously, developing independence can be a positive and empowering experience for many spouses, which assists them in coping during the separation (Gambardella, 2008). The risk of this is that when the husbands return, the spouses do not want to relinquish their new found control and independence. Bowling and Sherman (2008) report that wives who struggle to relinquish their control and independence may make the returned husband feel unwanted. A further difficulty when renegotiating roles post-deployment is if the soldier struggles to switch roles from soldier and combatant back to family member and partner (Reger & Moore, 2009).

Reserve personnel

In the UK, Browne et al. (2007) conducted research investigating possible reasons for the excess ill health found in reserve personnel. They found that the UK reserve forces had higher levels of exposure to trauma, lower unit cohesion, more problems

readjusting at home post-deployment, and lower marital satisfaction compared to UK regular personnel. Self-reported PTSD prevalence was also increased.

Wheeler and Torres Stone (2010) report that National Guard families may be at greater risk of problems as a result of deployment compared to active duty personnel. They suggest that spouses may be isolated from military life and support networks and may be at increased risk of financial strains and difficulty assisting children to understand the absence of their parent. The additional pressure of having a civilian job may also cause difficulties for reserve personnel. On return from deployment they not only have to reintegrate and renegotiate roles and boundaries at home but must do the same at work. This is often in the context of family, friends, and work colleagues who have little understanding of the military and the role of reserve forces (Browne, et al., 2007).

Faber et al. (2008) used Boss's (2002) framework of ambiguous loss to examine US reserve families experiences of deployment. Ambiguous loss refers to when someone is physically absent but psychologically present as might be the case during deployment separation. This can be confusing for family roles and boundaries as the family attempt to psychologically retain the soldier, whilst reassigning their responsibilities. When soldiers return from deployment, they in turn become physically present but psychologically absent. This is referred to as ambiguous presence. This psychological absence may be the result of wives not allowing the returned soldier to be psychologically involved as they defend their control over rules and boundaries, or due to the soldier finding it difficult to switch roles from

combatant to family member and civilian employee, or as a result of soldier trauma symptoms (Faber, et al., 2008).

It is, therefore, evident that reserve forces are exposed to an increased likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties and where possible should be included in studies in an attempt to try to understand the nuances of coping with deployment and the impact on relationships, for this group of military personnel.

The application of attachment theory

Attachment theory is a key theory in the study of both childhood and adult relationships. Within the military relationship literature, a few theoretical papers and research papers have applied attachment theory to understand the process of separation in the context of the military and operational deployments (Vormbrock, 1993; Medway, et al., 1995; Rosen, et al., 1995; Basham, 2008).

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) proposes that evolution led to the development of an innate reaction system which functions to keep us close to, and develop a strong bond with, the person who provides us with care and protection (the attachment figure). The attachment figure takes on the role of safe haven, meaning they serve as a source of comfort and security, and provide the role of secure base from which the attached individual can explore the outside world. The attachment system creates an innate desire for proximity maintenance; this keeps us close to the person who cares for and protects us. Unwanted or prolonged separation from the attachment figure results in separation distress, as separations are perceived as a threat to our safety and the attachment relationship.

Separation distress activates the attachment system which generates a behavioural response (attachment behaviours). Attachment behaviours (or proximity seeking behaviours) function to re-establish either physical (e.g. closeness) or psychological (e.g. mental representations of felt security) proximity with the attachment figure so that the attached individual regains feelings of safety and security, and in turn deactivates the attachment system. Some proximity seeking behaviours are adaptive such as physical contact (e.g. cuddling), others are maladaptive, such as protest behaviours (e.g. arguments and expressing distress) (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

Bowlby's theory originally referred to infant and primary caregiver relationships, but is applicable to adult relationships, most notably, romantic relationships (Pistole, 2010). Whereas children develop a sense of felt security from becoming emotionally connected to their primary caregiver, adults derive a sense of security from their romantic partners; through a unique commitment and a deep investment in each other's welfare, romantic partners become emotionally and behaviourally interdependent (Collins & Feeney, 2004). In adult attachment relationships both partners simultaneously play the role of attached individual and attachment figure; thus, they share both the attachment and care-giving roles (Pistole, 2010).

As well as the normative process of the attachment system as described so far, individual differences in attachment styles exist. There are three main attachment styles in adulthood: secure, anxious, and avoidant (Medway, et al., 1995). The attachment process described above represents securely attached people who are generally comfortable with intimacy and are responsive and attuned to the needs of the attached individual. The partner of the securely attached person functions as their

secure base enabling them to explore the outside world safe in the knowledge their partner will be available on their return.

Anxious attachments are formed due to inconsistent support and security being provided from an attachment figure. The individual becomes uncertain about the availability of the attachment figure and continuously monitors for cues that they will lose the attention and care of the attachment figure. They are likely to exhibit increased attachment behaviours and decreased exploratory behaviours as their partner does not represent a secure base. Avoidant attachments are created due to experiences of unresponsive, cool, and rejecting attachment figures (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Avoidant people relate intimacy with a loss of independence and are hesitant about forming close relationships with others. They may desire close relationships but are fearful of being rejected (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

Vormbrock (1993) conducted a literature review with the aim of examining six hypotheses, formulated from child attachment theory, of how spouses might react to war-time and job-related separations. The six hypotheses were:

- anxiety and depression as stress reactions
- a universal response pattern similar to those reported in child attachment theory such as protest, despair, and detachment
- conflicting emotions on reunion
- individual differences in separation reactions based on attachment style
- characteristics of separation such as length and frequency will have an effect
- and, an effect of social support

Vormbrock (1993) concluded that, the at home spouses experience a mixture of depression, anxiety and anger as hypothesised. Home based spouses who detach themselves, and/or seek contact with relatives, experience less distress during separation. Becoming too detached during separation may lead to more severe post-deployment readjustment difficulties. Home-based spouses tend to feel ambivalent about reunion; they seek attention but fear rejection and are irritated by their returned husband. Vormbrock (1993) proposed that the response patterns of spouses are in line with expected reactions to separation from an attachment figure and that the severity of reaction will depend on the security of attachment style.

Rosen et al. (1995) re-examined the reunion related hypotheses proposed by Vormbrock (1993) using data collected from spouses of US military personnel deployed to Operation Desert Storm (1991 Gulf War). Rosen et al. (1995) suggested that Vormbrock's hypotheses did not account for the possibility of positive growth in relationships following deployment, such as wives' increased independence. Rosen et al. (1995) proposed five patterns of adjustment during reunion based on attachment theory; distance, closeness, role sharing, independence, and dependence. They found that the majority of the spouses in their sample experienced positive events (e.g. greater closeness), with fewer reporting negative events (e.g. distancing). They conclude that there is partial evidence for features of reunion reactions similar to those reported in attachment theory and by Vormbrock's paper. They also found that increased stress during separation and pre-existing marital problems prior to deployment led to more problems at reunion and that the severity of difficulties during separation and at reunion are affected by reactions and coping dependent upon attachment style.

Medway et al. (1995) examined reactions to deployment separation using attachment theory. They hypothesised that the attachment system will be activated in situations where romantic partners who function as a secure base for each other are separated, especially in situations such as operational deployment that involve the potential of harm to one of the partners. They used two samples, both of spouses of military personnel deployed to Operation Desert Storm, but one sample where data was collected during the separation and the other sample where data was collected six months after reunion. The main results from their study indicate that during separation more disruption to life and coping, and low attachment security were associated with increased spousal distress. At reunion, those who experienced highly stressful separation disruption, and had a more insecure attachment style, suffered the most personal distress. The main finding was that low attachment security was consistently associated with greater distress (Medway, et al., 1995).

Basham (2008) applied attachment theory to examine the impact of combat on the relationships of returned military personnel. She suggests that military personnel who experience disturbing combat experiences (such as seeing someone killed or injuring or killing someone) may internalise the experiences in a way that disrupts early attachment relationship templates that previously provided safety and security. When the military partner returns home, their disrupted pattern of attachment impacts on their relationship with their spouse and family. Basham (2008) concludes that combat affects relationships due to secondary trauma in spouses and the cyclic patterns of disrupted attachments.

The literature examining the relationships of military personnel in the context of attachment theory provides some evidence indicating that deployment separations are likely to activate the attachment system which, if not managed successfully, may lead to both personal distress and relationship distress. Those with anxious or avoidant attachments may have an increased likelihood of problems managing the separation leading to relationship difficulties.

Limitations and rationale

There are several limitations to the existing literature that need to be highlighted and which form the basis of the rationale for this thesis. The majority of research has been conducted in the US, with only a handful of studies being conducted in the UK. To my knowledge, to date (up to 2010), only Dandeker et al. (2006) have conducted and published an empirical study of UK military personnel's relationships. Rona et al. (2007) and Browne et al. (2007) include measures of problems at home in their studies, however, the investigation of the relationships of UK military personnel was not the main focus of either of their studies.

A further limitation to the current literature is that the majority of studies use the non-military spouse as participants, focusing on how military life affects them. Only a small number examine the impact of military life on romantic relationships from the military personnel's perspective, with most of these examining the effect of combat and mental health. There is little research investigating the impact of military life on the relationships of military personnel from the military personnel's perspective more broadly and none in the UK military. Although the existing literature has been extremely useful in aiding understanding of the impact of deployment on

relationships, especially how wives cope, more research is required that can produce knowledge about military life in general and the impact this may have on relationship functioning and maintenance.

There are many methodological problems in the existing literature such as the frequent use of cross sectional data and the use of retrospective data collection. For example, in the study by Gimbel and Booth (1994), they rely on participants recalling their experiences from 20 years previously; this type of retrospective data could be prone to recall errors (Southwick, Morgan, Nicolaou, & Charney, 1997). Selective samples have been used in several studies. Allen et al. (2010) and Renshaw, Rodrigues, and Jones (2009) used samples recruited from marriage education workshops and Gabardella's (2008) sample consisted of couples attending marriage counselling.

The majority of existing research has investigated only those who are in married relationships ignoring co-habiting relationships and those in long term committed relationships but who do not currently live together and are not married. Due to the differences in entitlement to benefits such as housing and access to support services, investigating the difference between relationship types could assist in learning more about the associations between marriage, divorce, and the military benefits for married personnel. Furthermore, the frequency of co-habiting couples is on the rise and may represent a larger proportion of the military population than previously (Wilson & Stuchbury, 2010).

Based on these limitations, the romantic relationships of the UK military require further investigation. Understanding the personal relationships of military personnel is essential for guiding appropriate policies and interventions to improve well-being, retention and occupational effectiveness. As Karney and Crown (2007) state, "developing effective policies and programs that support military families requires accurate data on how these families have responded to the demands of recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq" (Pg. XVII). Research is, therefore, required in the UK that can provide more data on the impact military life has on the relationships of military personnel in terms of marital status, stability and quality.

Thesis objectives and aims

The over-arching objective of this thesis is to gain a detailed understanding of how military life generally, and deployment specifically, may impact on the romantic relationships of UK military personnel in the context of the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Five aims underpin the over-arching objective and will be examined using a mixed methods approach. The first four aims will be addressed using quantitative methods. The fifth aim will be addressed using a qualitative method.

A mixed methods approach

A mixed methods approach is used to address the five aims of this thesis. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) state that mixed methods approaches offer a methodological choice that provides the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results. A quantitative study can provide quantifiable data about prevalence and associated factors, but is not able to provide information about how

military personnel manage or experience those factors. A qualitative study is able to gain information about experiences and attempt to understand why certain factors might be associated with relationship difficulties. The small numbers used in qualitative studies, however, limits the extent to which results can be generalised and is not able to indicate the prevalence of relationship difficulties in the military.

In the context of the aims of this thesis, the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is appropriate. This thesis takes a quantitative dominant mixed approach as defined by Johnson et al. (2007). This means that the weight of the research leans more heavily on the quantitative side whilst using a qualitative study to add depth of understanding to the quantitative data.

Triangulation through the combing of results from different methods can be used to increase validity. Morse (1991) outlined two approaches to triangulation one of which, simultaneous triangulation, will be used in this thesis. Simultaneous triangulation means that there is limited or no interaction between the two sources of data during the process but the findings will complement each other at the interpretation stage. As Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) report, quantitative and qualitative methods used together lead to elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification from one method to another.

Quantitative study aims and hypotheses

The quantitative section of my thesis compromises four results chapters each addressing one of the four aims for this section. This thesis is not guided by a specific theory and although broad hypotheses have been set for each aim/chapter, these were

deduced from the US literature which cannot be directly applied to the UK military setting. Consequently, this thesis is explicitly exploratory.

Aim 1:

Compare marital status between the UK military and the general population of England and Wales and investigate if there are particular socio-demographics and military characteristics associated with marital status in the UK military.

Hypothesis:

- Compared to civilians, UK military personnel will marry younger

Aim 2:

Focusing on UK military personnel who are in a relationship, investigate the prevalence of experiencing relationship difficulties and the associated socio-demographic and military characteristics, including deployment status and deployment frequency and/or length? Are there differences between those in married and unmarried (co-habiting or long term non-co-habiting) relationships?

Hypotheses:

- Childhood adversity will be associated with relationship difficulties
- Deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period will be associated with relationship difficulties

Aim 3:

For UK military personnel who are in a relationship and have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, investigate if there are any deployment-related experiences associated with experiencing relationship difficulties

Hypothesis:

- Combat exposure or having a combat role will be associated with relationship difficulties

Aim 4:

Examine if the presence of mental health symptoms or alcohol misuse mediate the association between socio-demographics, military characteristics, or deployment-related experiences and relationship difficulties

Hypothesis:

- If associations between combat exposure or combat role and relationship difficulties exist, the existence of mental health problems will mediate these associations, so that combat exposure is only associated with relationship difficulties indirectly through mental health difficulties

Qualitative study aim

Aim 5:

Using a qualitative method, understand the experiences of UK military personnel in terms of how they manage and maintain their romantic relationships in the context of

military life, specifically during times of deployment. The qualitative study is purely inductive and therefore does not test or explore any hypotheses.

Thesis structure

The quantitative section begins at chapter 2 which provides details of the methods used. Chapters 3 to 6 are the quantitative results chapters and address aims 1 to 4 respectively. Chapter 7 provides an overview of all key quantitative findings. Chapter 8 is the quantitative discussion. At chapter 9 the qualitative section begins, which will address aim 5 of this thesis, beginning with an overview of the qualitative section. The qualitative methods are described in chapter 10. The qualitative results are presented in chapter 11 and the discussion in chapter 12. The final chapter 13 of this thesis will be the overall discussion bringing the two sections together.

CHAPTER 2: QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Data source:

My thesis uses data collected as part of a larger programme of research conducted by the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR). KCMHR is a multi-disciplinary research centre part of the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London. The current main project being undertaken is a large scale epidemiological study of the health and well-being of UK military personnel (Hotopf et al., 2006; Fear, et al., 2010). To date this cohort study has included two phases of data collection. My thesis uses data from phase 2, however, for completeness brief details of phase 1 are provided.

Phase 1

Study design and participants

The first stage of the KCMHR cohort study assessed the mental and physical health of UK veterans deployed to the 2003 Iraq War between 18 January and 28 April 2003. Two groups were used to compare mental and physical health outcomes between those who had deployed (the TELIC group), with personnel who were serving but did not deploy at that time (the 'Era' cohort). The UK Armed Forces give each military operation a code name and all campaigns are divided into operational phases and numbered, each of approximately six months. Operations to Iraq were called TELIC and TELIC 1 was the first operational tour to Iraq. Potential participants were identified by the UK Ministry of Defence's Defence Analytical Services Agency (DASA) (now called Defence Statistics). The TELIC 1 population

included 46,040 individuals and the Era population 339,660 individuals. Special Forces and high security personnel were excluded for security reasons.

Sampling was stratified by Service (Naval Services, including Royal Marines, Army or Royal Air Force) and enlistment type (regular or reserve; reserves are voluntary part time personnel who (may) have civilian jobs as well). Individuals within each stratum were randomly assigned a number and then sorted into ascending order. The first 7695 individuals in the TELIC 1 group and the first 10,003 individuals in the Era group were selected for the sample. The Era group included more individuals to take into account that around 10% of military personnel are medically downgraded at any one time (an indication of fitness to deploy). The extra Era individuals also allow for the likelihood that some of the personnel in the Era cohort would have been deployed on subsequent TELIC operations. Particular concern had been raised about the effect of deployment on reserves (Browne, et al., 2007). Reserves constitute a numerically small proportion of those deployed, therefore, they were oversampled (2:1) to allow for comparisons between regular and reserve personnel.

DASA provided monthly address and contact detail updates, as well as notifying KCMHR of any deaths among potential participants. 23 participants died before they could be sent questionnaires; 176 individuals were ineligible for other reasons (i.e. not having address data or not being deployable). The final number of people actively followed up was 17,499.

Data collection

Data were collected between June 2004 and March 2006. Participants were either contacted by post or via a team visit to their unit where they could complete the questionnaire in person. Both mail-outs and visits took place during the same time period. Allocation of visits was assigned by the distribution of the sample across military post-codes; post-codes were assigned a visit if the number of potential participants at that post-code were above a set threshold (>30 for the Army or RAF, >10 for the Royal Navy). All other participants were sent the questionnaires by post; these included reserves and those who had left the Armed Forces. All participants assigned to receive a mail out were sent a letter providing information about the study prior to the questionnaire being sent.

A number of methods were used to raise the profile of the study, including a set of instructions sent from a central military source to Commanding Officers and other relevant personnel, a series of articles in service publications and information posted on services websites. Military and civilian tracing was used to maximise response rates. Military tracing consisted of contacting senior administrative staff in the participants' unit and asking for assistance with distributing questionnaires and tracking down personnel, especially those who were highly mobile. Civilian tracing was carried out for participants who had left the Armed Forces. This included checking addresses against the electoral register, and seeking telephone numbers from directory enquires. To trace those where address details were out of date, the KCMHR team were granted permission to access addresses held on the National Strategic Tracing Service (NSTS).

Potential response bias was assessed in a smaller sample of 150 participants who had not responded to three contact attempts. This was a random sample equally divided between the TELIC and Era cohorts, and included regular personnel, reserves, and ex-serving personnel. These were selected for intensive follow-up and were offered a financial incentive to complete a short version of the questionnaire. Researchers attempted to make telephone contact with those who did not reply and did interviews by telephone, to gather the questionnaire data, where possible. 71 (47.3%) of these participants took part in the intensive follow-up study. There was no indication of higher rates of illness among persistent non-responders (Hotopf, et al., 2006; Tate et al., 2006).

Phase 1 had an overall response rate of 58.7% (N = 10,272) (Hotopf, et al., 2006). Non-response was mainly due to difficulties contacting personnel as a result of training, deployments, or being posted to a new location (Iversen, Liddell, Fear, Hotopf , & Wessely, 2006). There was no evidence of response bias in terms of health outcomes or fitness for deployment (Tate, et al., 2006).

Materials

A 28-page questionnaire booklet was devised and piloted for the data collection. The questionnaire included information informing participants that the entry to the study was entirely voluntary, and that the researchers were independent of the Ministry of Defence. Participants were also informed of the confidential nature of the questionnaire and that information provided would be stored anonymously and the individual responses would be entirely confidential.

The questionnaire consisted of seven sections: demographic; service information, including information on those no longer serving, current or last rank, and details of previous deployments; experiences before deployments, including expectations and receipt of vaccinations; experiences on deployment, including potentially traumatic experiences and morale; experiences after deployment; information on current health; and background information, including past medical history and adversity in early life. The Era sample was only asked to complete the deployment section if they had served on a major deployment since 2000.

Phase 2

Study design and participants

Phase 2 of the KCMHR cohort study (Fear, et al., 2010) asked participants from phase 1 to participate again and in addition, included two further samples, one to represent operational deployments to Afghanistan and one to ensure that the study continued to represent the current structure of the military. Of the 10,272 participants recruited at phase 1, 914 could not be followed up as they had not given consent to be contacted again, had died, or were non-contactable due to insufficient address information. Participants from phase 1 taking part at phase 2 were termed the follow-up sample. 37 participants who had returned completed questionnaires after phase 1 data collection had ended were included in the follow-up sample at phase 2. 9395 participants were entered into the data collection for phase 2; 7884 were regular personnel and 1511 were reserves.

The HERRICK sample was one of the additional samples recruited to represent the UK's expanding involvement in Afghanistan (operational tours to Afghanistan are

called HERRICK and are divided in to operational phases and numbered). This was a random sample of military personnel who had deployed to Afghanistan between April 2006 and April 2007. This time period spanned Operations HERRICK 4 and 5. The sample included approximately 10% of regular personnel and 90% of reservists who had deployed to Afghanistan during that period. The final HERRICK sample contained 1789 individuals (1455 regulars and 334 reserves).

The Replenishment sample was the second additional sample and was recruited from those who had joined the military since phase 1 (April 2003). Those in this sample would have had the opportunity to deploy to either TELIC or HERRICK during the study period. This sample was randomly drawn from personnel who joined the military and were trained between the end of April 2003 and April 2007. An additional criterion for the selection of reserves for this sample was that they had to have received a bounty payment in 2007 and 2008 (bounty payments are made for attending a minimum number of training sessions during the previous year). This criterion was included to ensure that the sample of reserves was representative of the current deployable force. The replenishment sample included 6628 participants (5128 regulars and 1500 reserves).

Contact information for all potential participants was provided by DASA. The overall sample for phase 2 included 17,812 potential study participants.

Data collection

Phase 2 data were collected between November 2007 and September 2009. Overall 9984 (56.5%) responded, this included 6429 (response rate 68.4%) participants in the

follow-up sample; 896 (response rate 50.1%) participants in the HERRICK sample; and 2665 (response rate 40.2%) participants in the replenishment sample. 7695 of the total participants (77%) returned their questionnaires by the end of 2008. DASA supplied monthly updates of participants' addresses. Data were collected through mail-outs and visits to military bases.

Questionnaires were then sent out to the entire sample. Non-responders were assigned either to a visit by researchers from KCMHR or a second mail-out. Visits were made to military bases where 30 or more sampled personnel were located. Over 100 visits were carried out across the UK and Germany during data collection for phase 2. Non-attendance during visits was usually due to personnel having been transferred to another unit or to work commitments. Questionnaires were left behind for those individuals who did not attend to be completed and forwarded at a later date.

Potential participants who did not respond to either a visit or a second mailing were entered into either military tracing (if they were still serving as a regular or a reserve) or civilian tracing (if they had left the UK Armed Forces). Military tracing carried out at phase 2 was similar to the tracing process at phase 1. For regular personnel, a senior person at the participants' units was contacted and requested to assist with the distribution of questionnaires; for reserve personnel, Training Majors within each training centre were used as the point of contact. Civilian tracing included checking addresses against the electoral register and seeking telephone numbers via directory enquires. The research team attempted to make telephone contact with these individuals to answer any queries about the study and to encourage them to complete

and return a questionnaire. Service-leavers who were difficult to locate were traced through the NSTS where possible.

Materials

A new questionnaire was designed and piloted across the three services for phase 2. As with the phase 1 questionnaire, the phase 2 questionnaire also informed participants that the research team were independent of the MoD and that participation was voluntary and that participants were free to withdraw at any time.

The questionnaire contained five sections; socio-demographics; service history; life since leaving the service (if relevant); most recent deployment experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan; and mental and physical health. Participants in the HERRICK and replenishment samples, who were being surveyed for the first time, were also asked questions about adversity in early life and baseline measures of physical activity; these had been captured at phase 1 for the follow-up sample.

Missing Data

Missing data were examined using the `mvpatterns` and `mdesc` commands in STATA. The proportion of missing data was examined to see if it accounted for more than 5% of observations. If less than 5% of observations were missing, then these observations were deleted from analyses. This is according to the assertion that small amounts of missing data (<5%) are unlikely to lead to significant bias (Shafer 1999). Among those variables examined, no items were missing for more than 5% of observations.

Ethical approval for Phase 1 and Phase 2

The KCMHR cohort study received full ethical approval both from the MoD Research Ethics Committee and King's College Hospital Research Ethics Committee (NHS REC reference: 07/Q0703/36).

Current Study Measures

My thesis uses data from phase 2 of the KCMHR cohort study, therefore only measures from phase 2 are discussed. Phase 1 data is not used because the relationship outcome measure questions were not asked at phase 1.

Overall Outcome measures

The main outcome measures investigated throughout this thesis are discussed in detail in the appropriate chapter specific methods section (chapter specific methods, pages 74-102) but in brief include marital status, relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, impact of military career on relationship, relationship or family problems as a result of deployment, and a composite measure of global relationship functioning.

Explanatory variables

The same socio-demographic and military characteristics are examined for their associations with the outcome measures consistently across all four results chapters (chapters 3 – 6); these are described below. Additional explanatory variables (deployment-related experiences) are used in results chapter 5 and 6 and details of these are provided in the chapter specific methods for results chapter 5 below (page 93).

Socio-demographic and military characteristics (used in all studies) (Table 1)

A range of socio-demographic factors are assessed, including age (at questionnaire completion), gender, relationship type, parental status, educational attainment, and childhood adversity (described in detail below). Military characteristics include service, rank, deployment status, and total amount of time deployed within the last three years. 13 months is used as a cut off for time deployed in a three year period in line with the UK Ministry of Defence "Harmony Guidelines"(NAO, 2006) which suggest this as an upper limit to help maintain the health and well-being of personnel. Deployment status includes only deployment or not to Iraq and/or Afghanistan as it is the impact of deployments to these two locations that is of interest for my thesis.

Measures of childhood adversity and relationship experience

Participants were asked about their family background covering topics of family cohesion and childhood antisocial behaviour. Two measures of adversity when growing up were based on a 16-item scale that participants could endorse true or false to, adapted from the Adverse Childhood Experience study scale (Felitti et al., 1998). These measures, derived from factor analysis, were childhood adversity relating to family relationships and childhood antisocial behaviour (Iversen, et al., 2007; MacManus, Dean, Iversen, et al., 2011).

Childhood family relationship adversity: Comprising 4 positive items which were reverse scored (e.g. "I came from a close family") and 4 negative items (e.g. "I used to be hit/hurt by a parent or caregiver regularly"). These 8 items were summed to form a cumulative measure and analysed as 0, 1 and 2+ adversities (Iversen, et al., 2007).

Childhood antisocial behaviour: Items were scored positively if participants answered true to "I used to get into physical fights at school" plus one of the following; "I often used to play truant at school" or "I was suspended or expelled from school" or "I did things that should have got me (or did get me) into trouble with the police" (MacManus, Dean, Bakir, et al., 2011).

Relationship type

In results chapters 4-6, only participants who were in a relationship at questionnaire completion are included: married, co-habiting, and long term relationship. "Long term relationship" refers to a serious relationship where the partners do not live together and are not married.

Table 1 Socio-demographic and military characteristic variables used in all studies

Independent Variables	Response Categories
Socio-demographic factors	
Age (in years at questionnaire completion)	Lower limit 18 years - upper limit 64 years
Gender	Male
	Female
Educational attainment	No qualification
	GCSEs/A-Levels
	Degree or higher
Childhood family relationship adversity	0
	1
	2+
Childhood antisocial behaviour	No
	Yes
Relationship type (for those in a relationship)	Married
	Co-habiting
	Long- term relationship
Parental Status	No children
	Children
Military characteristics	
Service	Royal Navy (including Royal Marines)
	Army
	Royal Air Force
Enlistment status	Regular
	Reserve
Rank	Officer
	Non-commissioned officer
	Other ranks
Serving status	Serving
	Left
Deployment status	Not deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan
	Deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan
Time deployed in the last 3 years	Less than 13 months
	13+ months

Study sample

The sample for this thesis is taken from phase 2 of the KCMHR cohort study and includes participants from the follow-up, HERRICK, and replenishment samples. Each results chapter uses a specific sub-sample, details of which are provided in the chapter specific methods for each results chapter below. Broadly, the sub-samples

range from including all participants, only those who are in a relationship, only those who are married, and only those who are in a relationship and have deployed.

Data analysis

Associations between the relationship outcomes and potential explanatory variables are investigated. Details of regression model building and the type of regression analysis used for each investigation are provided in the chapter specific methods sections below. All of the analyses use the survey command and sampling weights and are conducted in STATA 11.0 (StataCorp, 2009).

Sampling Weights Phase 2

Sample weights were created to account for the sampling strategies used. The weights reflected the inverse probability of a participant from a specific subpopulation and specific engagement type being sampled. Response weights were also created to account for non-response. Response weights were defined as the inverse probability of responding once sampled and driven by factors shown to empirically predict response (sex, rank, age and sample). Based on the assumption that the data are missing at random and that the observed variables modelled to drive non-response were correctly identified, the weighted analyses provide valid results. A combined weight was generated by multiplying the sample and response weights (Fear, et al., 2010).

Summary of the Methods Used for the Results Chapters:

A summary table of the aim, sample, inclusion criteria, outcome measures, explanatory variables and statistical methods used for each results chapter are presented in table 2.

Table 2 Summary of sample, measures and analysis for each results chapter

	Aim 1: Results Chapter 3 Marital status	**Aim 2: Results Chapter 4 Relationship Outcomes**	**Aim 3: Results Chapter 5 Deployment Specific Experiences**	**Aim 4: Results Chapter 6 Relationship Outcomes, Mental Health and Alcohol Problems**
Aim	Compare military and civilian marital status and examine the distribution of marital status in the UK military	Examine the prevalence of relationship difficulties and associations with socio-demographics and military characteristics	For those in a relationship and have deployed, examine if there are any deployment-related experiences associated with experiencing relationship difficulties	Examine mediating effects of mental health or alcohol misuse between explanatory variables and relationship difficulties
Sample				
Inclusion Criteria				
All	X			
In a relationship		X	X	X
Married only		X		
Deployed			X	(X)*
N =	9934	7581	3691	7581/3691*
Outcome Measure				
Marital status	X			
Relationship satisfaction		X	X	X
Relationship stability		X	X	X
Impact of career on relationship		X	X	X
Composite relationship functioning		X	X	X
Relationship or family problems as a result of deployment			X	X
Explanatory Variables				
Socio-demographics	X	X	X	X
Military characteristics	X	X	X	X
Deployment experiences			X	X
Analysis Methods				
Logistic Regression	X	X	X	X
Multinomial regression	X	X	X	X

* Study 4 uses two sub-samples; one investigating all of those in a relationship, the other all those in a relationship who have deployed

Chapter Specific Methods:

Chapter 3: Marital status: Comparison with the general population and associations with socio-demographic and military characteristics

The purpose of this study, as detailed in the aims (chapter 1, page 54), was to describe the military sample in terms of marital status, compare this to the marital status distribution of the England and Wales general population, and describe the distribution of the types of relationships the military have by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Sample

The sample for this study includes all participants from phase 2 of the KCMHR military health study who responded to the marital status question. Of the 9984 participants, 9934 (99.43%) provided data on marital status.

Non-responders

50 participants did not respond to the marital status question. Chi-Square analysis showed significant differences in that they tended to be younger, be of other ranks, and still be serving; none of the non-responders had children (table 3). Being younger, being in other ranks, and not having children are factors also associated with being single. It is possible that one reason for non-response to the marital status question was that they were single and did not see the question as being relevant to them.

Table 3 Significant associations between marital status, non-responders, and socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Responded % (n)	Did not respond % (n)
Total	99.6 (9934)	0.4 (50)
Mean age at questionnaire completion (years) *	34.8 (34.6 – 35.0 CI)	30.5 (28.0 – 32.9 CI)
Socio-demographics		
Parental status		
No*	99.2 (5529)	0.8 (50)
Yes	100 (4405)	0 (0)
Military characteristics		
Rank		
Officer	99.8 (2206)	0.2 (6)
NCO	99.7 (5455)	0.3 (20)
Other rank*	99.1 (2273)	0.9 (24)
Serving status		
Serving *	99.6 (7669)	0.4 (38)
Left	99.9 (2250)	0.1 (3)

* Chi-square analysis $p < 0.05$

Measures

Outcome measure

Marital status is assessed using a seven option question that asked, are you: married; living with partner; in a long term relationship; single and not in a long term relationship; separated; divorced; or widowed. Due to the distribution of the sample, with some groups having a small number of responses, the response categories were collapsed into three categories; in a relationship; single; and divorced, separated, or widowed (DSW) (figure 1).

Marital Status	n	%	Marital Status	n	%
Married	5171	56.3%			
Co-habiting	1142	11.4%	In a relationship	7581	78.5%
Long term relationship	1268	10.8%			
Single	1714	14.5%	Single	1714	14.5%
Separated	278	3.1%			
Divorced	345	3.7%	DSW (Divorced, Separated, Widowed)	639	7.0%
Widowed	16	0.1%			

Figure 1 Marital status response categories collapse

Comparison of marital status between the general population and the military

A comparison of the distribution of marital status between the general population and the military population is carried out. Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Statistical Bulletin: Marital status population projections, 2008-based (Office for National Statistics, 2010), are used to make this comparison. The ONS data were collected in the middle of 2008 in England and Wales. The bulletin makes trend-based assumptions, based on the actual data from 2008 and previous years, about future rates of marriage, divorce and cohabitation. In the report projections were made for marital status distribution in England and Wales in 2033 based on marital status data for the middle of 2008. For the purpose of this comparison the 2008 data are compared with the military marital status data from phase 2 of the KCMHR

military health study. 2011 census data are not used because marital status distribution by age group was not available.

ONS data used marital status categories: married, co-habiting, unpartnered never married, and unpartnered divorced or widowed. ONS classified people who were separated but still legally married in the married group and those who were in a relationship but were not living together, were not married and had never been married in the unpartnered never married group. To make comparisons between these ONS categories and the military data from the KCMHR cohort study, a new marital status variable was created that replicated these ONS category groupings. Details of this redistribution are shown in figure 2.

Marital Status	n	%	Marital Status	n	%
Married	5171	56.3%	Married	5449	59.4%
Separated	278	3.1%			
Co-habiting	1142	11.4%	Co-habiting	1142	11.4%
Long term relationship	1268	10.8%	Unpartnered never married	2982	25.3%
Single	1714	14.5%			
Divorced	345	3.7%	Unpartnered divorced and widowed	361	3.8%
Widowed	16	0.1%			

Figure 2 KCMHR original marital status response categories collapsed to ONS marital status response categories

To achieve the most meaningful comparison marital status is investigated by age group. The age range of the military sample was from 18 to 65 years, therefore only these ages are compared. The ONS data used age groupings of 16-29, 30-44, and 45-65 years. The youngest participants in the military sample are 18 years; comparisons should be interpreted with caution.

The Armed Forces only make up 1% of the England and Wales population (Office For National Statistics, 2013) and are included in the ONS data. This should be considered when interpreting the results.

Data analysis

General population and military marital status comparison

Weighted percentages are presented for the military sample and compared to the ONS percentages.

Military marital status distribution

Weighted percentages and total numbers are presented for marital status distributed across the socio-demographic and military characteristics. Unadjusted multinomial regression analyses are conducted to calculate unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) for the associations between marital status and each potential explanatory variable. All of the potential explanatory variables are associated with marital status. A priori theory suggests that age may confound possible associations of other variables when investigating marital status (Clarke & Berrington, 1999). Multinomial regression analyses are repeated for each of the potential explanatory variables but this time adjusting for age. The explanatory variables shown to be significantly

associated with marital status from the age adjusted MORs are included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Any variables no longer associated with marital status are assessed using a Wald test (Agresti, 1996), for their contribution to the adjusted multinomial regression model. If the Wald test indicates that variable is not making a significant contribution it is removed from the model.

Chapter 4: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship difficulties among the UK military

This results chapter examines the prevalence of relationship difficulties within the UK military, and investigates which socio-demographic and military characteristics are associated with relationship difficulties. It is widely accepted that when individuals evaluate their relationships, multiple dimensions are considered (Norton, 1983; Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Fincham & Linfield, 1997). If these dimensions are combined into a composite score it is possible that nuances (e.g. of how dimensions are associated with the various explanatory variables under investigation) may be masked. Composite measures are, however, useful when one is interested in holistic differences between positive and negative relationship experiences (Johnson, et al., 1986). Relationship difficulties in this thesis are, therefore, assessed using three separate relationship outcome measures (relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, impact of military career on relationship), and one composite measure (global relationship functioning).

Sample

All participants from phase 2 of the KCMHR military health study who were in a relationship at questionnaire completion are included. Of the 9934 subjects who provided data on marital status, 7581 (76.3%) are in a relationship. In this results chapter each outcome measure is initially examined for everyone in a relationship (N=7581), and then examined only for those who were married (N= 5171). This stratified analysis is conducted to investigate if there are any nuances in the factors associated with relationship difficulties between those in married and unmarried (co-habiting and long-term none co-habiting) relationships. For each outcome measure the sample varies depending on the response rate for that variable, details of each sample are presented in turn below.

Non-responders

Investigation of non-responders for each outcome measure revealed broadly similar results. The total number of non-responders for each outcome measure ranged from 61 to 84. Of these, 49 did not provide a response to any of the questions on the same page of the questionnaire suggesting they either accidently or intentionally skipped that section. This section of the questionnaire included all of the relationship outcome questions plus other questions about social activities, social support, and future career intentions. Of the remaining non-responding participants, numbers were too small to conduct any further meaningful investigation (range n = 15 – 35).

Because this results chapter included all participants who reported being in a relationship, not applicable responses are treated as missing data. Regression analyses investigating associations between non-responders and socio-demographic and

military characteristics broadly indicate that across each outcome measure there is no clear response bias, except for the relationship stability outcome. For the relationship stability outcome 390 participants responded not applicable, of these, 249 were in a long term relationship, 72 were co-habiting, and 69 were married. This distribution could indicate that those in a long term relationship did not think this question was relevant to them. Relationship stability was assessed with a question asking if the participant had discussed divorce or separation in the last year, this potential response bias may be due to the use of the word divorce leading these participants to perceive the question as irrelevant to them.

Measures

Outcome Measures

Relationship satisfaction

Measure:

Relationship satisfaction is assessed using the question: "How satisfied are you with your marriage/relationship?" There were six possible responses: extremely satisfied; satisfied; neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; dissatisfied; extremely dissatisfied; and, not applicable. Only those in a relationship are included in the sample, those who answered not applicable were removed. The remaining five response categories were collapsed to form three (figure 3).

Relationship satisfaction	n	%	Relationship satisfaction	n	%
Extremely satisfied	4154	56.3%	Satisfied	6473	86.7%
Satisfied	2319	30.4%			
Neither	585	7.6%	Neither	585	7.6%
Dissatisfied	341	4.5%	Dissatisfied	409	5.6%
Extremely dissatisfied	68	1.1%			

Figure 3 Relationship satisfaction response categories collapse

Sample:

Table 4 shows the number of participants who responded to this outcome measure and those who responded not applicable, for the all relationship types and the married only samples. The total sample used in the analysis for all relationship types is n = 7467 and for the married only sample n = 5139.

Table 4 Number of responses to relationship satisfaction outcome by sample

	Total n	Responded to relationship satisfaction n (%)	Responded not applicable n
All relationship types	7581	7467 (98.5)	50
Married only	5171	5139 (99.4)	8

Relationship stability: Discussed divorce or separation in the last year

Measure:

Karney and Crown (2007) state that although satisfaction and stability are likely to be associated they are not necessarily overlapping constructs; relationships may continue despite limited satisfaction and relationships may end when one partner is still satisfied, therefore, a complete examination of relationships should include questions of relationship stability as well as satisfaction.

Relationship stability is assessed using a singular question: "Have you or your spouse/partner seriously suggested the idea of divorce or permanent separation within the last year". Possible response options were yes, no, or not applicable. Not applicable responses were recoded as missing leaving a binary response variable (yes vs. no).

Sample:

Table 6 shows the total number of responses for each sub-sample and the amount of not applicable responses. All relationship types sample n = 7124 and married only sample n = 5077.

Table 5 Number of responses to relationship stability outcome by sample

	Total n	**Responded to discussed divorce or separation n (%)**	**Responded not applicable n**
All relationship types	7581	7124 (94.0)	390
Married Only	5171	5077 (98.2)	69

Perceived impact of military career on relationship

Measure:

As discussed in the introduction (chapter 1, page 21), the nature of military work creates the potential for competing demands and work/relationship conflict for military personnel. Perceptions of the impact military careers have on relationships are associated with relationship difficulties that can affect well-being and occupational effectiveness (Burrell, et al., 2006) and decisions to remain within military service (MoD, 2007). Work/relationship conflict is a further dimension of relationship functioning that differs from relationship quality. Norton (1983) suggests that measuring whether a relationship is of good quality suggests that a relationship has certain properties that make it good, for example the absence of arguments, that will then feature in all good quality relationships. To say that work positively impacts on ones' relationship does not necessarily stipulate that the relationship is good and this would not be a consistent feature of all relationships. As with relationship stability, although the two concepts are associated they do not necessarily overlap. Work/relationship conflict is therefore investigated as a separate dimension before being included in a composite measure.

Work/relationship conflict is assessed by asking participants: "overall, what impact has your military career had on your marriage/relationship?" There were four response categories: positive impact, negative impact, no impact, or not applicable. Not applicable responses were recoded to missing. Double coded responses were checked and recoded where appropriate, see table 6 for details of recoding.

Table 6 Details of double responses to perceived impact of military career on relationship

Double coded responses	Recoded to:	Total
No impact and positive impact	Positive impact	4
No impact and negative impact	Negative impact	3
Not applicable and no impact	No impact	3
Positive impact and negative impact	Missing	55
Positive impact and not applicable	Positive impact	1
Negative impact and not applicable	Negative impact	1

Sample:

Table 7 shows the number of participant responses and not applicable responses for both all relationship types (n = 7199) and married only (n =4992) samples.

Table 7 Number of responses to impact of military career on relationship by sample

	Total n	Responded to impact of career on relationship n (%)	Responded not applicable n
All relationship types	7581	7199 (95.0)	243
Married only	5171	4992 (93.2)	92

Composite variable: Global relationship functioning

A composite score combining the individual measures described above was generated. Responses to all measures were given a score (table 8) and then a composite score was made with the highest score being three. Accordingly, a score of three indicates poorer relationship functioning compared to a score of zero. Where a participant did not respond to any of the three questions they were coded as missing for this composite variable. The purpose of the composite measure is to examine the most "at risk" group (those who report negative responses on the most relationship

outcomes) therefore, the neither satisfied nor dissatisfied responses of the relationship satisfaction outcome are scored as 0.

Table 8 Outcome measure response scores for composite measure

Outcome measure	Response score
Relationship Satisfaction	
Satisfied	0
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	0
Dissatisfied	1
Discussed Divorce or separation	
No	0
Yes	1
Perceived impact of military career on relationship	
No impact	0
Positive impact	0
Negative impact	1

Sample:

Table 9 shows the sample size and total missing for the composite measure for the all relationship types (n = 6861) and married only (n = 4923) samples. All missing data is due to no response or missing data on any of the three outcomes (n = 720).

Table 9 Number of composite scores and missing scores by sample

	Total	Composite score n (%)	Missing
All relationship types	7581	6861 (90.5)	720
Married only	5171	4923 (95.2)	248

Data Analysis

Analysis of all four outcome measures is conducted using regression analysis. Relationship satisfaction, perceived impact of military career on relationship and global relationship functioning are analysed using multinomial regression analysis and discussed divorce or separation is analysed using logistic regression.

For all four outcome measures the analysis approach is the same. Unadjusted regression analyses are conducted to calculate unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs, for multinomial regression) or Odds Ratios (ORs, for logistic regression) for the associations between each outcome measure and all potential explanatory variables. Statistically significant associated unadjusted MORs or ORs are put into a multivariable regression model. Variables no longer significantly associated with the outcome measure in the full adjusted multivariable regression model are assessed for their contribution to the model using a Wald test (Agresti, 1996). If the Wald test indicates that the variable is not contributing to the model that variable is removed. If the Wald test indicates that the variable, although not directly associated, is contributing to the model the variable remains in the model.

Chapter 5: Are deployment-related experiences associated with relationship difficulties?

This results chapter aims to investigate which specific deployment-related experiences are associated with relationship difficulties.

Sample

This study used a sub-sample of participants who were in a relationship and had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan at the time they completed the questionnaire. Of the 9934 participants who responded to the question on marital status, 7581 were in a relationship, of these 3691 had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan (figure 4). The initial intention had been to stratify the analysis by marriage as conducted in results chapter 4. Unfortunately the numbers in many of the response categories

across several of the explanatory variables in this sub-sample are too small for this analysis to be meaningful and therefore this is not conducted.

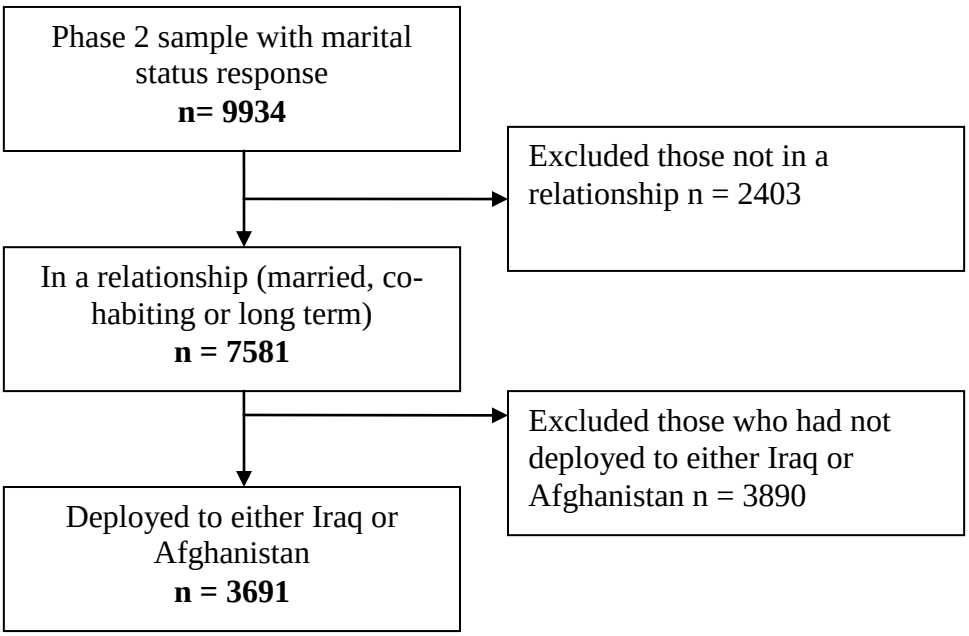

Figure 4 Summary of application of inclusion criteria for results chapter 5

Measures

Outcome measures

The relationship outcome measures used in results chapter 4 (relationship satisfaction, discussed divorce or separation, impact of military career on relationship and global relationship functioning) are used in this results chapter plus an additional measure described below. Because of the addition of the new measure the global relationship functioning measure was adapted for results chapter 5, details of this follow (page 88).

Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Participants who had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan were asked a series of questions regarding possible problems post-deployment; one of these asked "did you have relationship or family problems as a result of your most recent deployment?" This could be answered as either yes or no. This question allows examination of factors that might increase the likelihood of military personnel experiencing problems with their relationship or family as a direct result of their deployments. Of the 3691 participants who met the inclusion criteria for this study, 3439 (93.2%) provided a response to this question.

252 participants did not respond, of these, 118 did not respond to any question on the same page and the adjacent page of the questionnaire. These participants may have accidentally or intentionally skipped this section which also included questions about difficulties and challenges post-deployment and questions about deployment experiences for reserve personnel only. Regression analysis investigating associations between non-response and socio-demographic, military characteristics and deployment-related experiences indicates that the non-responders were more likely to be older, however due to the small numbers of non-responders (6.3%) it is believed that this will not bias the results.

Global relationship functioning

The composite measure created in results chapter 4 is used in this results chapter but with the addition of the relationship or family problems as a result of deployment outcome measure. This creates a composite variable with score range from 0 – 4. The number of participants scoring 4 was very small so the 3 and 4 score categories were

combined. The composite measure of global relationship functioning for this results chapter is also scored as 0, 1, 2, or 3, however in this results chapter a score of 3 could be reporting a negative response for either three or four of the four relationship outcome measures. Figure 5 shows the scoring for the composite measure of global relationship functioning.

Score	n	%		Score	n	%
0	1233	44.5%	→	0	1233	44.5%
1	927	33.0%	→	1	927	33.0%
2	374	13.6%	→	2	374	13.6%
3	169	6.2%	}	3	231	8.9%
4	62	2.6%	}			

Figure 5 Summary of response distribution for global relationship functioning

Explanatory variables

In addition to the socio-demographic and military characteristics used in all results chapters, deployment-related experiences are also examined with a series of deployment specific variables in this results chapter.

Deployment specific explanatory variables

For those who had deployed, specific information about deployment experiences were collected including location of most recent deployment, combat role, perceptions of work demands matching ability and training, perceptions of exposure to danger, amount of time spent in hostile areas, combat exposure (details provided below, page 91), measures of unit cohesion (details provided below, page 91),

welfare support, family support, whether they had financial difficulties at home, and if they received a verbal homecoming debrief. Details of the response categories for these deployment specific variables are provided in table 10.

Table 10 Deployment-related experiences investigated in results chapter 5

Deployment Experiences	Response Categories
Last deployment location	Iraq
	Afghanistan
Total number of deployments to Iraq and/or Afghanistan	1
	2
	3+
Combat Role	Combat
	Combat support
	Combat service support
Does my work in-theatre match my trade experience or ability	Yes
	No, generally above my ability
	No, generally below my ability
Perceived to be in serious danger of injury or death	Never
	Once or twice
	Sometimes
	Many times
Time in a hostile area	Not at all
	Up to one week
	One week to one month
	More than a month
Combat exposure	Continuous variable (0-36)
Unit Cohesion:	
My unit provided support for personal problems	Agree
	Neither
	Disagree
I felt informed about what was happening in my unit	Agree
	Neither
	Disagree
Seniors were interested in what I did	Agree
	Neither
	Disagree
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst I was deployed	Disagree
	Agree
The military provided enough support for my spouse whilst I was deployed	Yes, it was enough
	Yes, but it was not enough
	No, no support provided
I had serious financial problems at home during deployment	Disagree
	Agree
Did you receive a verbal homecoming brief?	No
	Yes

Combat exposure

Combat exposure is assessed using data collected on 13 specific experiences. Participants were asked to report the frequency of each experience during their most recent deployment (table 11 for details of items asked). Possible responses ranged from 'never' to '10+ times' on a five-point scale (scored 0-4). Scores are summed and ranged from 0-36 creating a continuous variable where a higher score indicated exposure to more of the different types of experiences and higher frequency of exposure and lower scores indicating less variation in types and lower frequency (Sundin et al., 2013).

Table 11 Items used to form the combat exposure variable

During your most recent TELIC/HERRICK deployment, how often did you:
Clear/search buildings
Give aid to wounded
See personnel seriously wounded or killed
Come under small arms/RPG fire
Come under mortar/artillery fire/rocket attack
Experience a landmine strike
Experience hostility from Iraqi/Afghani civilians
Discharge your weapon in direct combat
Experience an IED
Handle bodies
Had a mate shot/hit who was near you
Encounter sniper fire
Experience a threatening situation and was unable to respond due to rules and regulations

Unit Cohesion

In the KCMHR cohort study, unit cohesion was assessed using four questions (table 12). Responses to each of these questions was assessed across a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Due to the low frequency of responses a variable was created using a three point scale where strongly agree and agree were combined to a singular agree category and strongly disagree and disagree were combined into a singular disagree category.

These unit cohesion questions can be used as individual questions or as a composite. The appropriate use for the purpose of this thesis was examined by assessing the associations between each unit cohesion question and each relationship outcome measure. This examination indicated that the comradeship question was not associated with any of the four relationship outcome measures. The remaining three questions were associated in various ways. The use of a composite score is less meaningful in light of these associations; the three questions associated with the relationship outcomes are examined individually.

Table 12 Unit cohesion questions

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
I felt a sense of comradeship (or closeness) between myself and other people in my unit
I could have gone to most people in my unit if I had a personal problem
My seniors were interested in what I did or thought
I felt well informed about what was going on in my unit

Data analysis

Due to a new sub-sample being used in this results chapter, analysis is in two stages for each outcome measure. Associations between the relationship outcomes and socio-demographic and military characteristics are re-examined and new multivariable regression models built as per the approach used in results chapter 4 (page 85). Associations between specific deployment-related experiences and each relationship outcome are investigated. Initially ORs or MORs for deployment-related experiences and each relationship outcome are calculated adjusting for the socio-demographic and military characteristics. A full model is then built including the socio-demographic and military characteristics and all deployment-related experiences significantly associated with each specific relationship outcome, the

building of the full model for each outcome measure follows the same approach as described for results chapter 4 (page 86).

Chapter 6: Exploration of mental health symptoms, alcohol misuse, and the romantic relationships of UK military personnel

This results chapter investigates the mediating roles of mental health and alcohol misuse on the associations between the socio-demographic, military characteristics, and deployment-related experiences shown to be associated with relationship outcomes in results chapters 4 (page 139) and 5 (page 202).

Sample

Two samples are used in this results chapter; the first sample is used for investigating the possible mediating role of mental health and alcohol misuse on associations between the relationship outcomes and the socio-demographic and military characteristics identified in results chapter 4, and included all those in a relationship (n=7581); the second sample includes all those in a relationship and had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan at the time of questionnaire completion (n =3691) and is used to examine the mediating role of mental health and alcohol misuse and deployment-related experiences.

Measures

Outcome measures

All outcome measures from results chapters 4 and 5 are used in results chapter 6.

Explanatory variables

All explanatory variables found to be associated with the outcome measures in results chapters 4 and 5 are used in results chapter 6.

Mental health and alcohol variables (mediating variables)

Symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD)

The 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) is used to assess symptoms of CMD. GHQ-12 asks participants to rate their health over the last few weeks compared to usual. Response categories are scored from 0-3 and were recoded into binary scores (0-1) such that the responses 'better than usual' and 'same as/no more than usual' were coded as 0, and the responses 'rather more than usual' and 'much more than usual' were coded as 1 (table 13). The responses were then summed into a total score ranging between 0 and 12. Cases showing symptoms of CMD were defined as scoring four or greater.

The GHQ-12 is a widely used and well validated measure which has been shown to have good reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83). Examinations of the association with other measures have shown that it correlates with both measures of well-being and distress; the correlation with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) was 0.49 and with the Mental Health Inventory (MH) was 0.64 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988; McDowell, 2006). The GHQ-12 was validated against the Composite International Diagnostic Instrument – primary care version (CIDI-PC) in patients attending 15 health care centres around the world (Goldberg et al., 1997). Once scores are summed, with a cut off of 4, the sensitivity ranged between 75.0% – 85.0% and the specificity between 74.0% – 79.0%. The optimal threshold reported by Goldberg et

al. for a UK population was a summed score of 4 or more, with sensitivity of 84.6% and a specificity of 89.6% (Goldberg, et al., 1997).

Table 13 Items, response categories and codes of the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)

"Within the last few weeks have you…."	**Response categories**	**Initial codes**	**Binary codes**
Been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?	Better than usual	0	0
	Same as usual	1	0
	Less than usual	2	1
	Much less than usual	3	1
Lost much sleep over worry?	Not at all	0	0
	No more than usual	1	0
	Rather more than usual	2	1
	Much more than usual	3	1
Felt that you are playing a useful part in things?	More so than usual	0	0
	Same as usual	1	0
	Less so than usual	2	1
	Much less than usual	3	1
Felt capable of making decisions about things?	More so than usual	0	0
	Same as usual	1	0
	Less useful than usual	2	1
	Much less useful than usual	3	1
Felt constantly under strain?	Not at all	0	0
	No more than usual	1	0
	Rather more than usual	2	1
	Much more than usual	3	1
Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	Not at all	0	0
	No more than usual	1	0
	Rather more than usual	2	1
	Much more than usual	3	1
Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?	More so than usual	0	0
	Same as usual	1	0
	Less able than usual	2	1
	Much less able	3	1
Been able to face up to your problems?	More so than usual	0	0
	Same as usual	1	0
	Less able than usual	2	1
	Much less able	3	1
Been feeling unhappy and depressed?	Not at all	0	0
	No more than usual	1	0
	Rather more than usual	2	1
	Much more than usual	3	1
Been losing confidence in yourself?	Not at all	0	0
	No more than usual	1	0
	Rather more than usual	2	1
	Much more than usual	3	1
Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	Not at all	0	0
	No more than usual	1	0
	Rather more than usual	2	1
	Much more than usual	3	1
Been feeling reasonably happy all things considered?	More so than usual	0	0
	About same as usual	1	0
	Less so than usual	2	1
	Much less than usual	3	1

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Probable symptoms of PTSD are measured using the 17 item National Center for PTSD Checklist – civilian version (PCL-C) (Weathers, Litz, Herman, & Keane, 1994). The PCL-C asks respondents to rate the degree to which they were bothered by a list of 17 symptoms in the last month (table 14). No specific traumatic event was specified, rather participants were informed that their symptoms were 'problems or complaints that people sometimes had in relation to stressful experiences'. Response categories were scored 1 – 5 on a scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'extremely'. Total scores range 17 to 85 with a cut off score of 50+ used to identify cases of probable PTSD as reported in previous work for phase 2 of the KCMHR military health study (Fear, et al., 2010).

The PCL-C is a widely used measure of PTSD symptoms which has been widely used among both US military and civilian populations (Weathers, et al., 1994; Hoge et al., 2004). It has not as yet been validated among UK military personnel. The PCL-C is reported to have good reliability (0.94 – 0.97); convergent validity with a correlation of 0.93 with the Clinician Administered PTSD scale (CAPS) (Blanchard, Jones-Alexander, Buckley, & Forneris, 1996), 0.82 with the Mississippi Scale for PTSD (MS-C) and 0.77 with the Impact of Events Scale (IES) (Horowitz, Wilner, & Alvarez, 1979).

Table 14 Items included in the PTSD checklist (PCL-C), response scale and score

"How much have you been bothered by these problems in the last month?"	**Scale**	**Score**
	Not at all	**1**
	A little bit	**2**
	Moderately	**3**
	Quite a bit	**4**
	Extremely	**5**
Repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images of a stressful experience?		
Repeated, disturbing dreams of a stressful experience?		
Suddenly acting or feeling as if a stressful experience were happening again (as if you were re-living it)?		
Feeling very upset when something reminded you of a stressful experience?		
Having physical reactions (e.g. heart pounding, trouble breathing, sweating) when something reminded you of a stressful experience?		
Avoiding thinking about or talking about a stressful experience?		
Avoiding activities or situations because they remind you of a stressful experience?		
Trouble remembering important parts of a stressful experience?		
Loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy?		
Feeling distant or cut-off from other people?		
Feeling emotionally numb or being unable to have loving feelings to those who are close to you?		
Feeling as if your future will somehow be cut short?		
Having trouble falling or staying asleep?		
Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?		
Having difficulty concentrating?		
Being super alert, watchful or on-guard?		
Feeling jumpy or easily startled?		

Alcohol Misuse

Alcohol misuse is measured using the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) (Babor, Higgins-Biddle, Saunders, & Monteiro, 2001). The AUDIT contains 10 items. Scores range from 0-4 for each response (table 15) and are summed. Scores can be used in various ways but for the purpose of this study a score of 16 or more is used to define 'hazardous use that is also harmful to health' in the AUDIT (Babor, et al., 2001) but termed as alcohol misuse for the purpose of this study. This cut-off is higher than that used with civilian populations as previous studies of UK military personnel suggest a higher cut off (16+) may be useful since such a large proportion (67% of men and 49% of women) of the forces overall meet the criteria for 'hazardous alcohol use' (8+) (Fear et al., 2007).

The AUDIT is a widely used measure that has been well validated and has good reliability in a broad range of settings. Reinert and Allen (2007) reviewed 18 validation investigations of the AUDIT, reporting an average Cronbach's alpha of over 0.80 and using the most restrictive criterion considered in each investigation, the median sensitivity and specificity values were 86% and 89% respectively.

Table 15 WHO Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test items, response categories and scores

Variables	Response scale	Score
How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?	Never	0
	Monthly or less	1
	2 to 4 times a month	2
	2 to 3 times a week	3
	4 or more times a week	4
How many drinks of alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?	1 or 2	0
	3 or 4	1
	5 or 6	2
	7, 8, or 9	3
	10 or more	4
How often do you have six or more drinks on one occasion?	Never	0
	Less than monthly	1
	Monthly	2
	Weekly	3
	Daily or almost daily	4
How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?	Never	0
	Less than monthly	1
	Monthly	2
	Weekly	3
	Daily or almost daily	4
How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?	Never	0
	Less than monthly	1
	Monthly	2
	Weekly	3
	Daily or almost daily	4
How often during the last year have you needed a first drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?	Never	0
	Less than monthly	1
	Monthly	2
	Weekly	3
	Daily or almost daily	4
How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?	Never	0
	Less than monthly	1
	Monthly	2
	Weekly	3
	Daily or almost daily	4
How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?	Never	0
	Less than monthly	1
	Monthly	2
	Weekly	3
	Daily or almost daily	4
Have you or someone else been injured as a result of your drinking?	No	0
	Yes, but not in the last year	2
	Yes, during the last year	4
Has a relative or friend or a doctor or another health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?	No	0
	Yes, but not in the last year	2
	Yes, during the last year	4

Data Analysis

The distributions of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse cases across the socio-demographic and military characteristics are calculated as weighted percentages. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest three steps for conducting mediation analysis. Step one: establish associations between the dependent variable (DV) (the relationship outcome) and the independent variable (IV) (the socio-demographic, military characteristics, and deployment-related variables). This was conducted in results chapter 4 for the socio-demographic and military characteristics and chapter 5 for the deployment-related experiences. Step two: establish associations between the mediating variable (symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse) and the IV. Step three: regress the DV on the IV and mediator; mediation effect is evident if associations between the IV and DV are greatly reduced. In this analysis because there are several IVs, stage two and three were conducted in reverse order. The effect of the addition of the mediating variables to the existing regression models was conducted first, if the association between a specific IV and the DV changed then associations between the IV and mediator were examined. Figure 6 shows a model of mediation analysis.

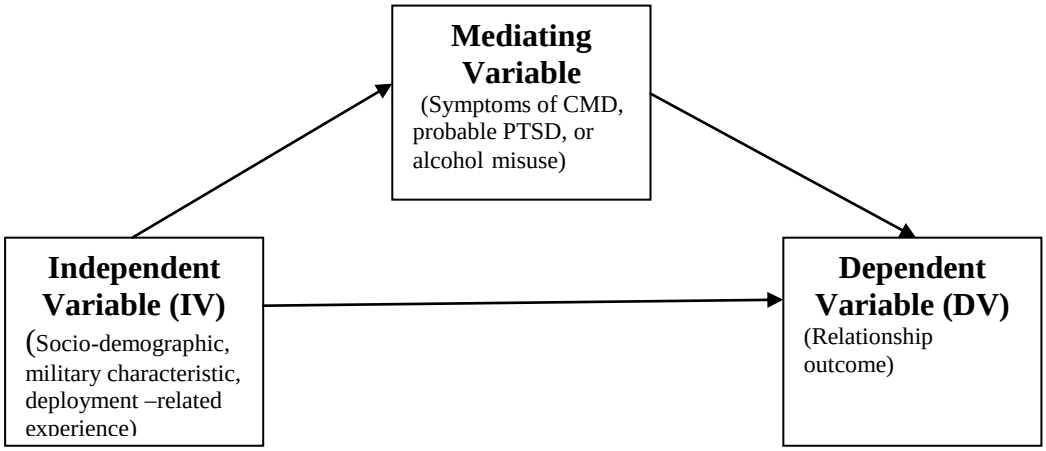

Figure 6 Mediation model

Summary

Data collected as part of phase 2 of the KCMHR cohort study is used to address the four aims of the quantitative section of my thesis. Each aim is addressed across four results chapters. The sample and design of each study conducted for each results chapter has been presented. The results from these studies follow in chapters 3 to 6.

CHAPTER 3: MARITAL STATUS: COMPARISON WITH THE GENERAL POPULATION AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND MILITARY CHARACTERISTICS

This results chapter:

- Compares the distribution of marital status between the UK military and the England and Wales general population. This is the first time the marital status distribution of the UK military population has been compared with the England and Wales general population
- Examines the distribution of marital status in the UK military and associations with socio-demographic and military characteristics.

Although these analyses were mainly exploratory, there was one a priori hypothesis: compared to the England and Wales general population, UK military personnel will marry younger.

Comparison between the UK military and the general population: marital status

Comparison of the distribution of marital status between England and Wales general population statistics and a representative military sample from the KCMHR military health study were made. As discussed in the method section (Chapter 2, page 77), caution should be taken when interpreting this comparison due to disparities between the datasets.

Across all age groups, the military have a higher percentage of marriage and a lower percentage of being unpartnered never married. 29.6% of the UK military under the age of 30 years are married compared to 9.6% of the general population of the same age group (table 16). This supports the hypothesis that UK military personnel marry younger compared to the general population.

Proportions of co-habiting couples under 30 years old are similar in both the general population and the military, but 30 to 64 year old military personnel have a lower proportion of co-habiting couples compared to the general population. Proportions of being unpartnered divorced or widowed in under 30 year old military personnel are higher than the general population, but in the 30 to 64 year old age group the general population have higher proportion of being unpartnered divorced or widowed compared to the military (table 16).

Table 16 General population and military sample marital status comparison by age group (% and n)

Age Group (in years)	Total		Married		Co-habiting		Unpartnered never married		Unpartered widowed or divorced	
	General (n)	Military (n)	General (%)	Military (%)	General (%)	Military (%)	General (%)	Military (%)	General (%)	Military (%)
< 30	10,221,000	3,636	**9.7**	**29.6**	**16.9**	**16.6**	**72.9**	**52.4**	**0.5**	**1.4**
30-44	11,542,000	4,826	**53.9**	**71.5**	**16.8**	**9.8**	**22.6**	**14.2**	**6.7**	**4.5**
45-64	13,638,000	1,472	**69.2**	**82.5**	**6.5**	**5.8**	**9.3**	**4.6**	**15.0**	**7.1**

NB: General population lowest age starts at 16 years compared to military population lowest age starts at 18 years; grouping of marital status modified from the military data to fit the available ONS statistics (see methods chapter for details; chapter 2, page 76); data taken at different years and time points for each sample; general population statistics include some military personnel (maximum prevalence in the general population sample 1.5%); General population data from the Office for National Statistical Bulletin 2008 (Office for National Statistics, 2010)

Marital status within the UK military

The categories used in the above comparison were assigned based on the data available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (Office for National Statistics, 2010). The remainder of these results investigate the marital status distribution of the UK military sample using a three category marital status variable created as described in the chapter specific methods (chapter 2, page 74). Detailed breakdowns of marital status by socio-demographic and military characteristics using five categories are shown in appendix 1 (table 79 and 80, pages 399- 401).

Distribution of marital status by socio-demographic and military characteristics

The majority (78.5%) of the UK military are in a relationship, with only small proportions being single (14.5%) and divorced, separated or widowed (7.0%). Of those in a relationship (n = 7581), the majority are married (71.8%), 14.5% are co-habiting, and 13.7% are in long term, non-cohabiting relationships. Chi-square analysis shows that marital status is significantly associated with age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, deploying for more than 13 months in the last three years, and serving status (table 17).

Table 17 Marital status by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Marital Status		
	In a relationship (Married, co-habiting, long term) % (n)	Single % (n)	Divorced, separated, widowed % (n)
Total	78.5 (7581)	14.5 (1714)	7.0 (639)
Socio-demographics			
Mean age at questionnaire completion (years) *†	35.9 (35.7 – 36.2)	28.3 (28.0 – 28.7)	38.7 (38.0 – 39.4)
Gender* **			
Male	79.8 (6817)	13.4 (1393)	6.8 (542)
Female	67.2 (764)	24.5 (321)	8.3 (97)
Education* **			
No qualifications	77.6 (462)	13.7 (100)	8.7 (51)
GCSE's/A-Levels	77.4 (5102)	15.7 (1228)	6.9 (429)
Degree or higher	82.4 (1700)	11.7 (350)	5.9 (119)
Childhood family relationship adversity **			
0	79.7 (3314)	14.3 (739)	6.0 (250)
1	78.9 (1469)	14.6 (331)	6.5 (110)
2+	77.1 (2559)	14.3 (577)	8.6 (256)
Childhood antisocial behaviour			
No	78.7 (6261)	14.4 (1403)	6.9 (526)
Yes	78.0 (1206)	14.5 (275)	7.5 (102)
Parental status* **			
No	68.2 (3645)	26.3 (1605)	5.5 (279)
Yes	89.3 (3936)	3.2 (109)	8.5 (360)
Military characteristics			
Service**			
Naval services	77.9 (1155)	16.5 (302)	5.6 (74)
Army	77.8 (4875)	15.0 (1149)	7.2 (428)
RAF	81.3 (1551)	11.4 (263)	7.3 (137)
Rank* **			
Officer	85.8 (1825)	9.1 (260)	5.1 (121)
NCO	80.4 (4315)	11.2 (709)	8.4 (431)
Other rank	65.1 (1441)	30.6 (745)	4.3 (87)
Engagement type* **			
Regular	79.0 (6361)	14.0 (1369)	7.0 (506)
Reserve	74.3 (1220)	18.7 (345)	7.0 (133)
Deployment status* **			
Not Deployed	80.3 (3890)	12.6 (760)	7.1 (326)
Deployed	76.5 (3691)	16.6 (954)	6.9 (313)
Time deployed in last 3 years * **			
Less than 13 months	79.2 (6483)	13.8 (1394)	7.0 (549)
13 + months	73.6 (605)	20.7 (195)	5.7 (46)
Serving status * **			
Serving	77.4 (5745)	15.8 (1452)	6.8 (472)
Left	81.5 (1823)	11.0 (261)	7.5 (166)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; percentages and chi-square statistics are weighted; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001 from chi-square analysis; † mean and 95% confidence interval

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with marital status

Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) from unadjusted univariable multinomial regression analyses indicated that all socio-demographic and military characteristics (except childhood antisocial behaviour) are significantly associated with marital status (table 18).

A priori theory indicates that age may confound possible associations between marital status and other variables, such as parental status (Clarke & Berrington, 1999). MORS were therefore, adjusted for age. Age adjusted MORs indicate that marital status is significantly associated with gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, parental status, service, rank, and engagement type. Deployment status, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status were no longer significantly associated with marital status and were removed from subsequent regression models (table 18). Of note childhood antisocial behaviour became significant after adjusting for age, indicating that previously age may have been covering this association.

Table 18 Unadjusted and age adjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with marital status

Demographics	Marital Status			
	Unadjusted MOR		Adjusted for age MOR	
	Single	DSW	Single	DSW
Socio-demographics			-	-
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	0.88 (0.87 – 0.89)***	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)***		
Gender				
Male				
Female	2.18 (1.83 – 2.59)***	1.45 (1.09 – 1.91)**	1.92 (1.57 – 2.33)***	1.52 (1.15 – 2.01)**
Education				
No qualifications	0.86 (0.66 – 1.13)	1.26 (0.88 – 1.81)	1.04 (0.77 – 1.38)	1.20 (0.84 – 1.72)
GCSE's/A-Levels				
Degree or higher	0.69 (0.59 – 0.82)**	0.81 (0.63 – 1.04)	1.36 (1.14 – 1.63)**	0.72 (0.55 – 0.94)*
Childhood family relationship adversity				
0				
1	1.03 (0.87 – 1.22)	1.09 (0.83 – 1.43)	0.97 (0.81 – 1.17)	1.10 (0.84 – 1.45)
2+	1.03 (0.89 – 1.19)	1.49 (1.20 – 1.84)***	0.98 (0.84 – 1.13)	1.51 (1.22 – 1.87)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour				
No				
Yes	1.01 (0.85 – 1.20)	1.11 (0.86 – 1.43)	0.73 (0.61 – 0.87)***	1.18 (0.91 – 1.54)
Parental Status				
No children				
Children	0.06 (0.05 – 0.08)***	1.18 (0.97 – 1.43)	0.08 (0.06 – 0.11)***	1.16 (0.95 – 1.41)
Military characteristics				
Service				
Naval services	1.10 (0.93 – 1.30)	0.78 (0.58 – 1.04)	1.38 (1.15 – 1.65)***	0.74 (0.55 – 0.99)*
Army				
RAF	0.73 (0.61 – 0.87)***	0.96 (0.76 – 1.22)	1.01 (0.83 – 1.21)	0.89 (0.70 – 1.13)
Rank				
Officer	0.76 (0.64 – 0.92)**	0.56 (0.44 – 0.72)***	1.28 (1.05 – 1.55)*	0.49 (0.37 – 0.63)***
NCO				
Other rank	3.39 (2.94 – 3.90)***	0.63 (0.47 – 0.83)***	1.35 (1.15 – 1.59)***	0.79 (0.58 – 1.09)
Engagement type				
Regular				
Reservist	1.42 (1.21 – 1.66)***	1.07 (0.84 – 1.37)	2.38 (1.98 – 2.86)***	0.94 (0.74 – 1.21)
Deployment status				
Not Deployed				
Deployed	1.37 (1.21 – 1.55)***	1.03 (0.85 – 1.25)	0.87 (0.76 – 1.00) ‡	1.17 (0.96 – 1.44)
Time deployed in last 3 years				
Less than 13 months				
13 + months	1.61 (1.32 – 1.94)***	0.87 (0.60 – 1.27)	1.19 (0.96 – 1.49)	0.95 (0.65 – 1.38)
Serving status				
Serving				
Left	0.66 (0.56 – 0.78)***	1.04 (0.85 – 1.29)	0.98 (0.82 – 1.18)	0.94 (0.75 – 1.17)

NB: In a relationship is used as reference category for all analyses. Adjusted model = each variable only adjusted for age; MORs are weighted;* p <0.05; ** p < 0.01; ** p < 0.001 ‡p = 0.051

The variables shown to be significantly associated with marital status after adjusting for age were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Education (Wald test: F (4, 9211) = 0.96, p = 0.4525) and childhood antisocial behaviour (Wald test; F (2, 9584) = 0.18 p = 0.8324) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model. A significant predictive model of marital status

included: age, gender, childhood family relationship adversity, parental status, service, rank, and engagement type. A total of 9605 cases were analysed and the full model was significantly reliable (F (20, 9585) = 59.15, df = 9604, p = <0.0001) (table 19).

Adjusted MORs (table 19) show that being younger, female, not having children, being in the Naval service, and being a reserve are associated with a greater likelihood of being single. Being older, female, having experienced two or more childhood family relationship adversities, and being a NCO, compared to being an officer, are associated with being more likely to be divorced, separated or widowed.

Table 19 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with marital status

Demographics	**Marital status**	
	Single	**DSW**
Socio-demographics	0.91 (0.90 – 0.93)**	1.03 (1.02 – 1.05)**
Age		
Gender		
Male		
Female	1.50 (1.21 – 1.85)**	1.76 (1.32 – 2.35)**
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.03 (0.84 – 1.24)	1.07 (0.81 – 1.40)
2+	1.07 (0.91 – 1.26)	1.42 (1.14 – 1.77)*
Parental status		
No children		
Children	0.08 (0.06 – 0.11)	1.14 (0.93 – 1.41)
Military Characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	1.29 (1.07 – 1.58)*	0.76 (0.56 – 1.02)
Army		
RAF	0.86 (0.70 – 1.06)	0.90 (0.70 – 1.16)
Rank		
Officer	0.96 (0.78 – 1.17)	0.49 (0.38 – 0.64)*
NCO		
Other rank	1.17 (0.98 – 1.41)	0.88 (0.66 – 1.24)
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.82 (1.48 – 2.23)**	0.82 (0.63 – 1.08)

NB: In a relationship is the reference category; MORs are weighted; † Adjusted for all variables in the table; * p <0.05 ** p <0.01, ***p < 0.001

Summary

There are a higher proportion of married people in the military compared to the general population. In accordance with the hypothesis, military personnel appear to be more likely to marry at a younger age compared to the general population. Although military personnel are more likely to be separated or divorced under the age of 30 years, divorce or separation over the age of 30 years seems less prevalent compared to the general population. Multivariable multinomial regression analysis suggests that military personnel who are single are more likely to be younger, female, not have children, be in the Naval services, and/or a reserve. Divorced, separated or widowed military personnel are more likely to be female, have experienced childhood family relationship adversity, be in the Army (compared to the Naval services), and be an NCO (compared to being an officer). Women are more likely than men to remain single or to be divorced separated or widowed (table 20).

Table 20 Marital status summary

Explanatory variable	**Single**	**DSW**
Socio-demographics	Younger	Older
	Female	Female
	No Children	
		Childhood family relationship adversity
Military Characteristics	Naval services	Army
		NCO
	Reserve	

CHAPTER 4: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND MILITARY CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES AMONG THE UK MILITARY

This chapter aimed to investigate the prevalence of relationship difficulties in the UK military and their associations with socio-demographic and military characteristics. Four outcome measures are used: relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, the impact of military career on relationship (work/relationship conflict), and a composite providing a global relationship functioning score. Results are presented for all 7581 participants who reported being in a relationship.

This results chapter also aimed to investigate whether there are differences in the factors associated with relationship difficulties for married and unmarried relationships. To meet this aim, analyses are repeated but stratified by relationship type, investigating just those who reported being married (n = 5171). The results from the original analyses, including all relationship types, are compared with the results from the stratified analyses to examine potential differences between factors associated with relationship difficulties for married and unmarried military personnel.

A priori hypotheses are; i) childhood adversity will be associated with relationship difficulties, ii) deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period will be associated with relationship difficulties.

Relationship difficulties within the UK military: Married, co-habiting, and long term relationships

Relationship satisfaction

Distribution of relationship satisfaction by socio-demographics and military characteristics

Of the 7581 participants who reported being in a relationship, 7467 (98.5%) responded to the relationship satisfaction question. Table 21 shows the distribution of relationship satisfaction within the military and how this is distributed across various socio-demographic and military characteristics. The majority are satisfied with their relationship (86.8%). Only a small proportion is dissatisfied with their relationships (5.6%), and 7.6% report being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their relationship. Childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, rank, engagement type, and serving status, are associated with relationship satisfaction (see appendix 2, table 81, page 402 for distribution using 5 response categories).

Table 21 Relationship satisfaction by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Relationship satisfaction		
	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Total	86.8 (6473)	7.6 (585)	5.6 (409)
Socio-demographics			
Age at questionnaire completion (years) †	36.8 (36.5 – 37.0)	35.9 (35.1 – 36.7)	36.9 (36.0 – 37.9)
Gender			
Male	86.9 (5814)	7.5 (525)	5.6 (367)
Female	85.6 (659)	8.6 (60)	5.8 (42)
Education			
No qualifications	87.0 (388)	6.9 (34)	6.1 (28)
GCSE's/A-Levels	86.2 (4327)	8.2 (424)	5.6 (264)
Degree or higher	87.4 (1478)	6.4 (109)	6.2 (102)
Childhood family relationship adversity ***			
0	90.3 (2969)	5.4 (184)	4.3 (139)
1	87.4 (1266)	7.7 (116)	4.9 (67)
2+	82.1 (2072)	10.3 (266)	7.6 (191)
Childhood antisocial behaviour**			
No	87.5 (5426)	7.3 (471)	5.2 (310)
Yes	83.3 (982)	9.2 (110)	7.5 (93)
Relationship type***			
Married	87.5 (4484)	7.0 (376)	5.5 (279)
Co-habiting	88.0 (986)	7.4 (90)	4.6 (47)
Long term relationship	81.3 (1003)	11.2 (119)	7.5 (83)
Parental status			
No	87.8 (3133)	7.2 (258)	5.0 (174)
Yes	85.8 (3340)	8.0 (327)	6.2 (235)
Military characteristics			
Service			
Naval services	87.3 (997)	6.4 (74)	6.3 (71)
Army	86.8 (4131)	7.9 (389)	5.3 (261)
RAF	86.3 (1345)	7.6 (122)	6.1 (77)
Rank*			
Officer	88.4 (1606)	5.6 (106)	6.0 (106)
NCO	86.3 (3672)	8.1 (354)	5.6 (240)
Other rank	86.4 (1195)	8.6 (125)	5.0 (63)
Engagement type**			
Regular	87.2 (5464)	7.5 (477)	5.3 (318)
Reserve	83.3 (1009)	8.7 (108)	8.0 (91)
Deployment			
Not Deployed	86.7 (3346)	7.6 (305)	5.7 (212)
Deployed	86.9 (3127)	7.5 (280)	5.6 (197)
Time deployed in last 3 years			
Less than 13 months	87.1 (5558)	7.5 (495)	5.4 (344)
13 + months	85.5 (507)	7.4 (52)	7.1 (35)
Serving status*			
Serving	86.8 (4894)	7.2 (419)	6.0 (329)
Left	86.6 (1567)	8.8 (166)	4.6 (79)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; percentages and chi-square analysis are weighted; † mean and 95% confidence intervals; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001 from chi-square analysis

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction

Unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) show that education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, rank, engagement type, and serving status, are significantly associated with relationship satisfaction (table 22). Age and parental status have borderline significant associations.

Table 22 Unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratio (MORS) and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction

Demographics	Relationship satisfaction	
	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion	0.99 (0.98 – 1.00)‡	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)
Gender		
Male		
Female	1.17 (0.84 – 1.62)	1.06 (0.72 – 1.57)
Education		
No qualifications	0.84 (0.54 – 1.30)	1.08 (0.67 – 1.74)
GCSE's/A-Levels		
Degree or higher	0.77 (0.59 – 0.99)*	1.09 (0.83 – 1.44)
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.47 (1.10 – 1.94)**	1.17 (0.82 – 1.66)
2+	2.08 (1.65 – 2.62)***	1.92 (1.48 – 2.51)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No		
Yes	1.31 (1.01 – 1.69)*	1.52 (1.14 – 2.03)*
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	1.05 (0.78 – 1.40)	0.84 (0.58 – 1.22)
Long term relationship	1.73 (1.33 – 2.24)***	1.48 (1.09 – 2.00)*
Parental status		
No		
Yes	1.14 (0.93 – 1.40)	1.26 (0.99 – 1.60)
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	0.80 (0.59 – 1.08)	1.17 (0.85 – 1.61)
Army		
RAF	0.96 (0.75 – 1.23)	1.15 (0.85 – 1.55)
Rank		
Officer	0.67 (0.52 – 0.88)**	1.04 (0.79 – 1.37)
NCO		
Other rank	1.07 (0.83 – 1.38)	0.89 (0.63 – 1.26)
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.21 (0.93 – 1.58)	1.57 (1.18 – 2.09)**
Deployment		
Not Deployed		
Deployed	0.99 (0.81 – 1.21)	0.98 (0.77 – 1.24)
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	1.00 (0.71 – 1.43)	1.34 (0.88 – 2.03)
Serving status		
Serving		
Left	1.25 (1.00 – 1.55)*	0.76 (0.57 – 1.01)≠

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted; * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; ‡$p = 0.052$; ≠$p = 0.66$

The factors significantly associated with relationship satisfaction are included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Although parental status is not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction (table 22), previous research suggests that having children may impact on relationship satisfaction (see chapter 1, page 22); therefore parental status was included in the multivariable multinomial regression model.

Variables not contributing to the model and not included are; education (Wald test: F (4, 6937) = 0.52, p = 0.7209), childhood antisocial behaviour (Wald test: F (2, 6939) = 1.23, p = 0.2914), and rank (Wald test: F (4, 9937) = 0.86, p = 0.484). A significant predictive model of relationship satisfaction includes childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, parental status, engagement type, and serving status. A total of 7257 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (14, 7243) = 8.08, df = 7256, p = <0.0001) (table 23).

Table 23 Adjusted† MOR and 95% confidence interval for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction

Demographics	Relationship satisfaction	
	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Socio-demographics		
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.46 (1.10 – 1.94)*	1.19 (0.84 – 1.69)
2+	2.02 (1.60 – 2.56)**	1.89 (1.45 – 2.47)***
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	1.06 (0.78 – 1.43)	0.93 (0.63 – 1.37)
Long term relationship	1.97 (1.49 – 2.62)**	1.67 (1.18 – 2.36)**
Parental status		
No		
Yes	1.34 (1.08 – 1.67)*	1.43 (1.08 – 1.89)**
Military characteristics		
Engagement Type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.17 (0.89 – 1.53)	1.71 (1.27 – 2.31)***
Serving status		
Serving		
Left	1.37 (1.09 – 1.72)*	0.78 (0.57 – 1.05)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted:*p < 0.05; ** p <0.01, ***p <0.001; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted MORs indicate that relationship dissatisfaction is significantly associated with childhood family relationship adversity, being in a long term relationship, having children, and being a reserve. These results provide partial confirmation of hypothesis i) of this results chapter, showing relationship satisfaction is associated with childhood family relationship adversity.

Relationship stability

Distribution of relationship stability (discussed divorce or separation in the last year) by socio-demographic and military characteristics

7124 (94.0%) of the 7581 participants who were in a relationship responded to the question asking if they or their spouse/partner had seriously suggested the idea of divorce or permanent separation in the last year; the majority of this UK military

sample have not. Age, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, and time deployed in the last three years, are associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year (table 24).

Table 24 Discussed divorce or separation in the last year, response distribution by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Discussed divorce or separation	
	No % (n)	Yes % (n)
Total	81.9 (5840)	18.1 (1284)
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion (years) †*	37.4 (37.1 – 37.6)	35.3 (34.7 – 35.7)
Gender		
Male	81.6 (5241)	18.4 (1169)
Female	84.4 (599)	15.6 (115)
Education* **		
No qualifications	80.3 (343)	19.7 (84)
GCSE's/A-Levels	80.0 (3816)	20.0 (943)
Degree or higher	87.7 (1418)	12.2 (215)
Childhood family relationship adversity * **		
0	85.5 (2694)	14.5 (456)
1	82.5 (1146)	17.5 (239)
2+	77.0 (1856)	23.0 (549)
Childhood antisocial behaviour * **		
No	83.8 (4971)	16.2 (953)
Yes	72.7 (814)	27.3 (316)
Relationship type* **		
Married	84.0 (4255)	16.0 (822)
Co-habiting	77.5 (837)	22.5 (221)
Long term relationship	73.5 (748)	26.5 (241)
Parental status * **		
No	84.7 (2782)	15.3 (509)
Yes	79.8 (3058)	20.2 (775)
Military characteristics		
Service* **		
Naval services	86.1 (925)	13.9 (165)
Army	79.7 (3629)	20.3 (901)
RAF	85.1 (1286)	14.9 (218)
Rank* **		
Officer	88.3 (1557)	11.7 (216)
NCO	80.7 (3307)	19.3 (801)
Other rank	77.4 (976)	22.6 (267)
Engagement type **		
Regular	81.5 (4867)	18.5 (1097)
Reserve	85.8 (973)	14.2 (187)
Deployment* **		
Not Deployed	84.5 (3120)	15.5 (596)
Deployed	78.7 (2720)	21.3 (688)
Time deployed in last 3 years*		
Less than 13 months	82.7 (5055)	17.3 (1077)
13 + months	78.3 (436)	21.7 (111)
Serving status		
Serving	82.0 (4400)	18.0 (961)
Left	81.7 (1429)	18.3 (322)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; †mean and 95% confidence intervals; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ for chi – square analysis; percentages and chi-square statistics are weighted

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship instability (discussing divorce or separation in the last year)

Unadjusted Odds Ratios (ORs) indicate that age, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, and time deployed in the last three years, are significantly associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year (table 25).

Table 25 Unadjusted Odds Ratio (OR) and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year

Demographics	Unadjusted OR
Socio-demographics	
Age in years at questionnaire completion	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)***
Gender	
Male	
Female	0.83 (0.64 – 1.06)
Education	
No qualifications	0.98 (0.73 – 1.31)
GCSE's/A-Levels	
Degree or higher	0.56 (0.46 – 0.67)***
Childhood family relationship adversity	
0	
1	1.25 (1.02 – 1.52)*
2+	1.76 (1.49 – 2.06)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour	
No	
Yes	1.93 (1.63 – 2.30)***
Relationship type	
Married	
Co-habiting	1.53 (1.26 – 1.87)***
Long term relationship	1.90 (1.56 – 2.31)***
Parental status	
No	
Yes	1.40 (1.21 – 1.62)**
Military characteristics	
Service	
Naval services	0.64 (0.52 – 0.79)***
Army	
RAF	0.69 (0.57 – 0.83)***
Rank	
Officer	0.55 (0.46 – 0.67)***
NCO	
Other rank	1.22 (1.01 – 1.48)**
Engagement type	
Regular	
Reserve	0.72 (0.59 – 0.89)**
Deployment	
Not Deployed	
Deployed	1.47 (1.27 – 1.70)***
Time deployed in last 3 years	
Less than 13 months	
13 + months	1.33 (1.03 – 1.72)*
Serving status	
Serving	
Left	1.02 (0.86 – 1.19)

NB: No response is used as reference category; OR statistics are weighted;* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

The factors significantly associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year, are included in a multivariable logistic regression model. Age (Wald test: F (1, 6230) = 0.23, p = 0.6327), education (Wald test: F (2, 6229) = 1.24, p = 0.2888), and time deployed in the last three years (Wald test; F (1. 6230) = 0.05, p = 0.8233), do not significantly contribute and are not included. A significant predictive model of discussing divorce or separation in the last year includes; childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, and deployment status. A total of 6924 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (12, 6912) = 15.94, df = 6923, p <0.0001) (table 26).

Table 26 Adjusted† OR and 95% confidence interval for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year

Demographics	Adjusted OR
Socio-demographics	
Childhood family relationship adversity	
0	
1	1.16 (0.94 – 1.42)
2+	1.48 (1.24 – 1.76)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour	
No	
Yes	1.37 (1.13 – 1.66)***
Relationship type	
Married	
Co-habiting	1.63 (1.31 – 2.03)***
Long term relationship	2.10 (1.66 – 2.65)***
Parental status	
No	
Yes	1.68 (1.41 – 1.98)***
Military characteristics	
Service	
Naval services	0.75 (0.60 – 0.94)*
Army	
RAF	0.80 (0.66 – 0.98)*
Rank	
Officer	0.70 (0.57 – 0.85)***
NCO	
Other rank	1.15 (0.94 – 1.42)
Engagement type	
Regular	
Reserve	0.77 (0.62 – 0.97)*
Deployment	
Not Deployed	
Deployed	1.25 (1.07 – 1.46)**

NB: 'No' response is used as reference category; OR statistics are weighted; *p <0.05, **p <0.01,*** p< 0.001; †OR adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted ORs indicate that having experienced childhood family relationship adversities, childhood antisocial behaviour, co-habiting with partner or being in a long term relationship (opposed to being married), having children, being in the Army, being a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) (compared to being an officer), being a regular, and having deployed, are significantly associated with relationship stability (discussing divorce or separation in the last year) (table 26). These results provide further confirmation of hypothesis i) as both childhood family relationship adversity and childhood antisocial behaviour are associated with relationship stability.

Impact of military career on relationship

Distribution of impact of military career on relationships by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Participants were asked what impact their military career has on their relationship. Of the 7581 participants who were in a relationship, 7199 (95.0%) responded to this question. 42.6% of military personnel in a relationship perceive their military career to have a negative impact on their relationship, 32.2% report no impact, and 25.2% report a positive impact. Age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status, are all significantly associated with the perceived impact of military career on relationships (table 27).

Table 27 Impact of military career on relationship distributions by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Impact of military career on relationship		
	No Impact % (n)	Positive Impact % (n)	Negative Impact % (n)
Total	32.2 (2280)	25.2 (1808)	42.6 (3111)
Socio-demographics			
Age at questionnaire completion (years) † *	36.8 (36.4 – 37.2)	38.5 (38.0 – 38.9)	34.2 (33.9 – 34.5)
Gender**			
Male	31.6 (2019)	25.5 (1635)	42.9 (2827)
Female	38.5 (261)	22.5 (173)	39.0 (284)
Education***			
No qualifications	32.8 (135)	30.4 (127)	36.8 (166)
GCSE's/A-Levels	32.1 (1525)	23.3 (1136)	44.6 (2177)
Degree or higher	31.0 (501)	28.4 (450)	40.6 (683)
Childhood family relationship adversity ***			
0	34.1 (1086)	26.3 (814)	39.6 (1265)
1	34.2 (463)	25.4 (351)	40.4 (586)
2+	28.6 (682)	23.6 (595)	47.8 (1180)
Childhood antisocial behaviour ***			
No	33.5 (1959)	25.3 (1533)	41.2 (2487)
Yes	26.0 (301)	24.4 (256)	49.6 (594)
Relationship type***			
Married	32.9 (1616)	28.0 (1423)	39.1 (1953)
Co-habiting	33.5 (354)	19.7 (210)	46.8 (492)
Long term relationship	26.8 (310)	15.2 (175)	58.0 (666)
Parental status			
No	33.2 (1104)	25.0 (825)	41.8 (1485)
Yes	31.4 (1176)	25.4 (983)	43.2 (1626)
Military characteristics			
Service*			
Naval services	31.2 (342)	23.9 (254)	44.9 (504)
Army	31.3 (1426)	26.1 (1197)	42.6 (1975)
RAF	35.9 (512)	23.5 (357)	40.6 (632)
Rank***			
Officer	28.4 (503)	29.4 (523)	42.2 (752)
NCO	33.3 (1364)	24.8 (1014)	41.9 (1725)
Other rank	33.3 (413)	20.7 (271)	46.0 (634)
Engagement type***			
Regular	31.1 (1812)	24.5 (1445)	44.4 (2768)
Reserve	41.7 (468)	31.0 (363)	27.3 (343)
Deployment***			
Not Deployed	34.6 (1269)	27.2 (1001)	38.2 (1443)
Deployed	29.3 (1011)	22.7 (807)	48.0 (1668)
Time deployed in last 3 years***			
Less than 13 months	33.0 (1998)	26.1 (1606)	40.9 (2576)
13 + months	20.6 (127)	15.4 (90)	64.0 (351)
Serving status***			
Serving	29.7 (1611)	23.0 (1277)	47.3 (2599)
Left	39.1 (668)	30.8 (526)	30.1 (510)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; † mean and 95% confidence intervals; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$ from chi-square analysis; percentages and chi-square statistics are weighted

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with impact of military career on relationship

Unadjusted MORs (table 28) indicate that age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status, are associated with impact of military career on relationship.

Table 28 Unadjusted MOR and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with impact of military career on relationships

Demographics	Impact of military career on relationship	
	Positive Impact	**Negative Impact**
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)***	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)***
Gender		
Male		
Female	0.72 (0.57 – 0.92)**	0.74 (0.60 – 0.92)**
Education		
No qualifications	1.28 (0.95 – 1.71)	0.81 (0.61 – 1.07)
GCSE's/A-Levels		
Degree or higher	1.26 (1.06 – 1.50)**	0.94 (0.81 – 1.10)
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	0.96 (0.79 – 1.17)	1.01 (0.85 – 1.20)
2+	1.07 (0.90 – 1.26)	1.43 (1.24 – 1.66)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No		
Yes	1.24 (1.01 – 1.53)**	1.55 (1.29 – 1.85)***
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	0.69 (0.55 – 0.86)***	1.17 (0.98 – 1.41)
Long term relationship	0.67 (0.53 – 0.85)***	1.82 (1.53 – 2.18)***
Parental status		
No		
Yes	1.07 (0.93 – 1.24)	1.10 (0.97 – 1.25)
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	0.92 (0.75 – 1.32)	1.05 (0.88 – 1.26)
Army		
RAF	0.78 (0.65 – 0.94)**	0.83 (0.71 – 0.97)*
Rank		
Officer	1.39 (1.17 – 1.65)***	1.18 (1.01 – 1.38)*
NCO		
Other rank	0.83 (0.67 – 1.02)	1.09 (0.92 – 1.30)
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	0.94 (0.78 – 1.13)	0.46 (0.38 – 0.55)***
Deployment		
Not Deployed		
Deployed	0.99 (0.85 – 1.15)	1.49 (1.31 – 1.69)***
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	0.94 (0.68 – 1.31)	2.51 (1.95 – 3.22)***
Serving status		
Serving		
Left	1.01 (0.87 – 1.18)	0.48 (0.41 – 0.56)***

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted;* p <0.05; **p <0.01; ***p < 0.001

The factors significantly associated with impact of military career on relationships (table 28) are included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Although the unadjusted MORs for parental status is not significantly associated, this is included in the model as it is associated with relationship satisfaction and discussing divorce or separation in the last year. Variables that do not contribute to the model and not included are; education (Wald test: F (4, 6301) = 1.59, p = 0.1738) and deployment status (Wald test; F (2, 6568) = 0.19, p = 0.8268). Parental status is not significantly associated with impact of military career on relationship, however, the Wald test: (F (2, 6568) = 3.74, p = 0.0238)) indicates that it is contributing, therefore parental status remains in the final model.

A significant predictive model includes: age, gender, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status. A total of 6570 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (36, 6540) = 13.35, df = 6569, p <0.0001) (table 29).

Table 29 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with perceived impact of military career on relationships

Demographics	Impact of military career on relationship	
	Positive Impact	**Negative Impact**
Socio-demographics		
Age (years)	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)***	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)***
Gender		
Male		
Female	0.87 (0.67 – 1.13)	0.72 (0.56 – 0.91)**
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	0.97 (0.79 – 1.18)	1.02 (0.85 – 1.23)
2+	1.04 (0.87 – 1.25)	1.42 (1.21 – 1.66)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No		
Yes	1.28 (1.01 – 1.62)*	1.31 (1.06 – 1.60)**
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	0.73 (0.57 – 0.94)*	1.26 (1.02 – 1.57)*
Long term relationship	0.75 (0.56 – 0.99)*	1.69 (1.34 – 2.14)***
Parental status		
No		
Yes	0.92 (0.78 – 1.09)	1.15 (0.98 – 1.34)
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	0.86 (0.69 – 1.08)	1.05 (0.86 – 1.27)
Army		
RAF	0.73 (0.59 – 0.88)**	0.96 (0.80 – 1.14)
Rank		
Officer	1.21 (1.00 – 1.46)*	1.49 (1.25 – 1.77)***
NCO		
Other rank	1.21 (0.93 – 1.58)	0.93 (0.75 – 1.16)
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	0.82 (0.66 – 1.01)	0.57 (0.46 – 0.71)***
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	1.02 (0.72 – 1.44)	1.85 (1.42 – 2.40)***
Serving status		
Serving		
Left	0.95 (0.78 – 1.13)	0.56 (0.47 – 0.67)***

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001; † MORs adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted MORs indicate that being older, being married (compared to co-habiting or long term long term relationship) and being in the Army (compared to the RAF), are associated with reporting a positive impact of military career on relationship. Being younger, male, having experienced childhood family relationship adversity, co-habiting or being in a long term relationship, being a regular, having deployed for more than 13 months in three years, and still serving (compared to left service), are

associated with reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship. Childhood antisocial behaviour and being an officer are associated with being more likely to report both a positive and negative impact. These results provide further evidence for the acceptance of hypothesis i) as reporting a negative impact is associated with childhood family relationship adversity. There is also evidence towards the partial acceptance of hypothesis ii) as deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period is also associated with reporting a negative impact.

Global relationship functioning

Distribution of global relationship functioning by socio-demographics and military characteristics

A composite variable incorporating all three relationship outcome measures was produced to provide an overall measure of global relationship functioning. The composite score ranges from 0 to 3, with 0 representing the most positive relationship functioning and 3 the most negative relationship functioning.

Composite scores were available for 6861 (90.5%) of the 7581 participants who were in a relationship. 51.9% score 0, 33.7% score 1, 10.7% score 2, and 3.7% score 3. This indicates that just over half of this UK military sample report positive relationship functioning across all three relationship outcome measures. Age, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status, are all significantly associated with global relationship functioning (table 30).

Table 30 Global relationship functioning distributions across socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Global relationship functioning score			
	0	1	2	3
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Total	51.9 (3535)	33.7 (2331)	10.7 (752)	3.7 (243)
Socio-demographics				
Age at questionnaire completion (years) †*	38.52 (38.2 – 38.9)	35.42 (35.0 – 35.8)	35.23 (34.6 – 35.9)	35.67 (34.6 – 36.8)
Gender				
Male	51.6 (3164)	33.9 (2113)	10.7 (680)	3.8 (226)
Female	55.2 (371)	31.2 (218)	11.0 (72)	2.6 (17)
Education*				
No qualifications	54.7 (223)	30.7 (121)	11.7 (47)	2.9 (15)
GCSE's/A-Levels	49.7 (2261)	34.7 (1606)	11.6 (544)	4.0 (169)
Degree or higher	55.9 (860)	32.6 (531)	8.1 (141)	3.4 (51)
Childhood family relationship adversity * **				
0	56.0 (1688)	32.2 (93)	9.1 (275)	2.7 (77)
1	53.8 (714)	32.9 (438)	10.0 (140)	3.3 (43)
2+	45.4 (1052)	36.2 (841)	13.2 (315)	5.2 (117)
Childhood antisocial behaviour * **				
No	53.8 (3061)	33.1 (1902)	9.8 (575)	3.3 (174)
Yes	42.1 (4207)	37.2 (412)	15.1 (169)	5.6 (65)
Relationship type* **				
Married	55.7 (2740)	31.3 (1535)	9.6 (483)	3.4 (165)
Co-habiting	44.7 (454)	38.7 (383)	13.7 (133)	2.9 (23)
Long term relationship	35.1 (341	43.5 (413)	14.7 (163)	6.7 (55)
**Parental status ** **				
No	53.7 (1647)	34.0 (1118)	8.9 (294)	3.4 (131)
Yes	50.5 (1888)	33.5 (1213)	12.0 (458)	4.0 (142)
Military characteristics				
Service**				
Naval services	51.8 (527)	36.6 (388)	7.3 (90)	4.3 (41)
Army	51.1 (2230)	33.3 (1442)	11.9 (521)	3.7 (162)
RAF	54.4 (778)	32.5 (501)	9.8 (141)	3.3 (40)
Rank**				
Officer	54.8 (948)	33.6 (585)	8.2 (146)	3.4 (57)
NCO	52.0 (2051)	33.1 (1299)	11.1 (449)	3.8 (147)
Other rank	46.7 (536)	36.4 (447)	13.0 (157)	3.9 (39)
Engagement type* **				
Regular	50.5 (2840)	34.7 (2037)	11.0 (653)	3.8 (208)
Reserve	64.0 (695)	25.2 (294)	8.0 (99)	2.8 (35)
Deployment* **				
Not Deployed	55.8 (1969)	32.3 (1161)	8.5 (324)	3.4 (115)
Deployed	47.0 (1566)	35.4 (1170)	13.5 (428)	4.1 (128)
Time deployed in last 3 years* **				
Less than 13 months	53.5 (3135)	32.9 (1954)	10.2 (631)	3.4 (198)
13 + months	33.1 (185)	46.1 (242)	15.4 (76)	5.4 (23)
Serving status* **				
Serving	47.9 (2496)	36.8 (1911)	11.1 (593)	4.2 (200)
Left	62.2 (103)	25.5 (419)	9.6 (159)	2.7 (42)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; † mean and 95% confidence intervals;* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ from chi-square analysis; percentages and chi-square statistics are weighted

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning

Unadjusted MORs indicate that age, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, deployment status, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status, are associated with global relationship functioning (table 31).

Table 31 Unadjusted MOR and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning

Demographics	Global relationship functioning score		
	1	**2**	**3**
Socio-demographics			
Age at questionnaire completion(years)	0.96 (0.95 – 0.97)***	0.96 (0.95 – 0.97)***	0.96 (0.95 – 0.98)***
Gender			
Male			
Female	0.86 (0.69 – 1.06)	0.96 (0.70 – 1.31)	0.62 (0.33 – 1.44)
Education			
No qualifications			
GCSE's/A-Levels	0.80 (0.61 – 1.05)	0.91 (0.62 – 1.34)	0.65 (0.34 – 1.25)
Degree or higher	0.83 (0.72 – 0.97)*	0.62 (0.48 – 0.78)***	0.76 (0.52 – 1.11)
Childhood family relationship adversity			
0			
1	1.06 (0.89 – 1.26)	1.14 (0.88 – 1.49)	1.28 (0.81 – 2.00)
2+	1.39 (1.21 – 1.60)***	1.79 (1.45 – 2.21)***	2.36 (1.66 – 3.35)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour			
No			
Yes	1.44 (1.21 – 1.71)***	1.96 (1.55 – 2.48)***	2.17 (1.52 – 3.11)***
Relationship type			
Married			
Co-habiting	1.54 (1.28 – 1.84)***	1.80 (1.38 – 2.32)***	1.06 (0.64 – 1.79)
Long term relationship	2.20 (1.83 – 2.65)***	2.45 (1.88 – 3.19)***	3.12 (2.11 – 4.62)***
Parental status			
No			
Yes	1.05 (0.93 – 1.18)	1.44 (1.019 – 1.74)***	1.27 (0.93 – 1.72)
Military characteristics			
Service			
Naval services	1.08 (0.91 – 1.28)	0.61 (0.45 – 0.81)*	1.11 (0.74 – 1.68)
Army			
RAF	0.92 (0.78 – 1.07)	0.77 (0.61 – 0.98)***	0.82 (0.54 – 1.24)
Rank			
Officer	0.96 (0.83 – 1.11)	0.70 (0.55 – 0.89)**	0.85 (0.59 – 1.23)
NCO			
Other rank	1.22 (1.03 – 1.45)***	1.30 (1.02 – 1.66)***	1.15 (0.74 – 1.80)
Engagement type			
Regular			
Reserve	0.57 (0.48 – 0.68)***	0.57 (0.43 – 0.75)***	0.58 (0.37 – 0.91)***
Deployment			
Not Deployed			
Deployed	1.30 (1.14 – 1.47)***	1.87 (1.55 – 2.25)***	1.43 (1.05 – 1.94)*
Time deployed in last 3 years			
Less than 13 months			
13 + months	2.26 (1.79 – 2.87)***	2.44 (1.75 – 3.40)***	2.63 (1.56 – 4.43)***
Serving status			
Serving			
Left	0.53 (0.46 – 0.62)***	0.66 (0.53 – 0.83)***	0.51 (0.34 – 0.76)***

NB: 0 score is used as reference category; MORs are weighted;* p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p <0.001

The factors significantly associated with global relationship functioning are included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Education (Wald test: F (6, 6013) =

1.19, p = 0.3095) and service (Wald test; F (6, 6273) = 1.12, p = 0.3486) do not significantly contribute and are not included in the final model.

A significant predictive model includes: age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, deployment status, time deployed in the last three years, and serving status. A total of 6279 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (39, 6240) = 9.61, df = 6278, P <0.0001) (table 32).

Table 32 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning

Demographics	**Global relationship functioning score**		
	1	**2**	**3**
Socio-demographics			
Age (years)	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)***	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.99 (0.97 – 1.02)
Childhood family relationship adversity			
0			
1	1.09 (0.91 – 1.29)	1.14 (0.87 – 1.51)	1.42 (0.87 – 2.30)
2+	1.40 (1.20 – 1.63)***	1.60 (1.27 – 2.01)***	2.42 (1.63 – 3.59)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour			
No			
Yes	1.22 (1.00 – 1.49)*	1.52 (1.17 – 1.97)***	1.60 (1.06 – 2.41)*
Relationship type			
Married			
Co-habiting	1.61 (1.31 – 1.99)***	1.74 (1.28 – 2.37)***	1.38 (0.75 – 2.52)
Long term relationship	1.95 (1.54 – 2.46)***	2.45 (1.75 – 3.45)***	3.30 (1.97 – 5.49)***
Parental status			
No			
Yes	1.23 (1.06 – 1.42)**	1.68 (1.34 – 2.11)***	1.37 (0.95 – 1.98)
Military characteristics			
Rank			
Officer	1.30 (1.11 – 1.53)***	0.96 (0.74 – 1.25)	1.09 (0.71 – 1.67)
NCO			
Other rank	0.87 (0.71 – 1.08)	0.99 (0.73 – 1.34)	0.82 (0.48 – 1.40)
Engagement type			
Regular			
Reserve	0.68 (0.55 – 0.83)***	0.81 (0.60 – 1.11)	0.78 (0.48 – 1.29)
Deployment status			
Not deployed			
Deployed	0.88 (0.76 – 1.01)	1.42 (1.14 – 1.76)***	0.92 (0.63 – 1.35)
Time deployed in last 3 years			
Less than 13 months			
13 + months	1.76 (1.38 – 2.26)***	1.63 (1.15 – 2.31)**	1.80 (1.04 – 3.12)*
Serving status			
Serving			
Left	0.62 (0.52 – 0.74)***	0.82 (0.63 – 1.07)	0.42 (0.26 – 0.70)***

NB: 0 score is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, **p < 0.01, **p <0.001; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted MORs indicate that scoring 1 is associated with:

- being younger
- childhood family relationship adversity
- childhood antisocial behaviour
- co-habiting or long term relationship compared to married
- having children
- being an officer
- being a regular
- deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period
- still serving at time of questionnaire completion

Scoring 2 is associated with:

- being younger
- childhood family relationship adversity
- childhood antisocial behaviour
- co-habiting or long term relationship compared to being married
- having children
- having deployed
- deploying for more than 13 months in three years.

Scoring 3 is associated with:

- childhood family relationship adversity
- childhood antisocial behaviour
- being in a long term relationship compared to being married
- deploying for more than 13 months in three years
- still serving at questionnaire completion

Summary: Married, co-habiting, and long term relationship sample

The relationships of this representative UK military sample seem mainly resilient as the majority report being satisfied, not discussing divorce or separation with spouse/partner in the last year, and no impact or a positive impact of their military career on their relationship. More than half score 0 on a global relationship functioning measure, indicating they have not reported any negative relationship outcomes.

Decreased marital satisfaction is associated with having experienced childhood family relationship adversity, being in a long term relationship compared to being married, having children, and being a reserve. Having discussed divorce or separation in the last year is associated with childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, being in a co-habiting or long term relationship compared to being married, having children, being in the Army, being an NCO, being a regular and having deployed to either Iraq of Afghanistan.

Negative impact of military career on relationship is associated with being younger, male, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, being in a co-habiting or long term relationship compared to being married, a regular, having deployed for more than 13 months in the last three years, and still serving.

There are inconsistencies between these three outcomes as each measure reflects a different relationship dimension. Reserves are more likely to be dissatisfied with their relationship, but regulars are more likely to have discussed divorce and report their military career to have a negative impact on their relationship. Being in the Army is

associated with discussing divorce or separation but also reporting a positive impact of military career on relationship.

Scoring 3 on the global relationship functioning measure indicates the most “at risk” group as they provide a negative response to all of the relationship outcomes. This “at risk” group is more likely to report childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, being in a long term relationship compared to being married, having deployed for more than 13 months in the last 3 years, and still be serving.

Being in a long term relationship and childhood family relationship adversity are key factors associated with experiencing relationship difficulties as both of these variables are consistently associated with negative responses to all relationship outcomes (table 33). It is the socio-demographic characteristics (childhood family relationship adversity and long term relationship) that appear to be the main factors across all measures.

Table 33 Results summary: Married, co-habiting and long term relationships

	Relationship dissatisfaction	Discussed Divorce or Separation	Impact of Military Career on Relationship	Global relationship Functioning
			Negative	**Score 3 (most at risk)**
Socio-demographic characteristics				
Age			Younger	
Gender	-	-	Male	-
Childhood family relationship adversity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Childhood antisocial behaviour	-	✓	✓	✓
Relationship type	Long term	Co-habiting and long term	Co-habiting and long term	Long term
Parental status	Children	Children	-	-
Military characteristics				
Service	-	Army	-	-
Rank	-	NCO	-	-
Engagement type	Reserve	Regular	Regular	-
Deployment status	-	Deployed	-	-
Time deployed in last three years	-	-	13 months+	13 months+
Serving status	-	-	Serving	Serving

Relationship difficulties within the UK military: Married personnel

Relationship type has been shown to be significantly associated with all of the relationship outcomes. A stratified analysis of just those who were married investigates potential nuances between factors associated with relationship difficulties for married and unmarried (co-habiting and long-term none-cohabiting) relationships. By comparing these two analyses, more information about the challenges for married and unmarried couples can be accessed.

Relationship satisfaction

Distribution of relationship satisfaction by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Of the 5171 participants who reported being married, 5139 (99.4%) responded to the relationship satisfaction question. The distribution of responses is similar to the distribution when examining all relationship types with the majority reporting being satisfied with their marriages (87.5%), 5.5% reporting relationship dissatisfaction, and 7.0% reporting being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction

A multivariable multinomial regression model was built; a total of 5004 cases were analysed and the full model is significantly reliable ($F (8, 4996) = 6.47$, $df = 5003$, $p = <0.0001$) (table 34). Adjusted MORs indicate that for UK military personnel who are married, relationship dissatisfaction is significantly associated with childhood family relationship adversity, and being a reserve. These associations are the same as those for the analysis conducted with all relationship types (see table 34).

Table 34 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction amongst married UK military personnel

Demographics	Relationship satisfaction	
	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Socio-demographics		
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.56 (1.11 – 2.21)**	1.23 (0.82 – 1.85)
2+	1.95 (1.47 – 2.59)***	1.70 (1.24 – 2.33)***
Children		
No		
Yes	1.54 (1.17 – 2.04)**	1.28 (0.93 – 1.76)
Military characteristics		
Engagement Type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.41 (1.01 – 1.97)*	1.53 (1.05 – 2.21)*

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted:* $p < 0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Relationship stability

Distribution of relationship instability (discussed divorce or separation in the last year) by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Of the 5171 participants who were in a relationship, 5077 (98.2%) responded to the question on discussing divorce or separation in the last year. The distribution of response is similar to when examining all relationship types with the majority having not discussed divorce in the last year (84.0%)

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year

A multivariable logistic regression model was built for associations with discussing divorce in the last year for married UK military personnel. A total of 5025 cases were

analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (7, 5018) = 13.07, df = 5024, p <0.0001) (table 35).

Adjusted Odds Ratios indicate that childhood antisocial behaviour, parental status, being in the Army (compared to being in the RAF), being a NCO, and having deployed, are significantly associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year for married personnel (table 35). In this stratified analysis, looking at only those who are married, childhood family relationship adversity and engagement type are not associated with discussing divorce. This indicates that being a regular and having experienced childhood family relationship adversity may be more pertinent factors in terms of relationship stability for those in unmarried relationships.

Table 35 Adjusted† OR for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year amongst married UK military personnel

Demographics	**Adjusted OR (95% CI)**
Socio-demographics	
Childhood antisocial behaviour	
No	
Yes	1.47 (1.17 – 1.85)***
Children	
No	
Yes	1.53 (1.25 – 1.87)***
Military characteristics	
Service	
Naval services	0.83 (0.64 – 1.08)
Army	
RAF	0.73 (0.57 – 0.93)**
Rank	
Officer	0.61 (0.49 – 0.77)***
NCO	
Other rank	1.24 (0.92 – 1.66)
Deployment	
Not Deployed	
Deployed	1.33 (1.11 – 1.60)**

NB: 'No' response is used as reference category; OR statistics are weighted; *p <0.05, **p<0.01, *** p<0.001; †OR adjusted for all variables in the table

Impact of military career on relationships

Distribution of impact of military career on relationships by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Of 5171 married participants, 4992 (96.5%) responded to the impact of military career on relationship question. 39.1% reported their military career to have a negative impact on their relationship, 28.0% report a positive impact and 32.9% report no impact. This distribution differs from that including all relationship types with less people reporting a negative impact and more people reporting a positive impact.

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with impact of military career on relationship

A multivariable multinomial regression model was built for associations between socio-demographic and military characteristics and impact of military career on relationship for those who were married. A total of 4552 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable ($F(26, 4526) = 9.22$, $df = 4551$, $P < 0.0001$) (table 36).

Adjusted MORs indicate that being older and being in the Army (compared to the RAF) are associated with reporting a positive impact of military career on relationship. Being younger, childhood family relationship adversity, having children, and having deployed for more than 13 months in three years, and still serving are associated with reporting a negative impact. Males, childhood antisocial behaviour, being an officer, and being a regular are associated with being more likely to report both positive and negative impact. The results for married personnel differ from those

for all relationship types. Married males, regulars, and those still serving are likely to report both a negative and a positive impact not just a negative impact. This suggests that these factors can be either positive or negative for married personnel but for unmarried personnel these factors are associated with an increased likelihood of reporting a negative impact.

Table 36 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with perceived impact of military career on relationships amongst married UK military

Demographics	Perceived impact of military career on relationship	
	Positive Impact	**Negative Impact**
Socio-demographics		
Age (years)	1.02 (1.01 – 1.04)***	0.97 (0.96 – 0.99)***
Gender		
Male		
Female	0.68 (0.48 – 0.95)*	0.65 (0.47 – 0.89)**
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.00 (0.78 – 1.26)	1.02 (0.82 – 1.27)
2+	1.11 (0.91 – 1.36)	1.46 (1.20 – 1.77)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No		
Yes	1.34 (1.02 – 1.77)*	1.42 (1.20 – 1.76)**
Parental status		
No		
Yes	1.01 (0.83 – 1.21)	1.21 (1.01 – 1.45)*
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	0.80 (0.62 – 1.03)	1.04 (0.82 – 1.31)
Army		
RAF	0.69 (0.55 – 0.86)***	0.95 (0.78 – 1.17)
Rank		
Officer	1.27 (1.03 – 1.56)*	1.61 (1.33 – 1.96)***
NCO		
Other rank	1.35 (0.94 – 1.94)	1.02 (0.74 – 1.40)
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	0.74 (0.57 – 0.95)*	0.65 (0.49 – 0.84)***
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	1.10 (0.71 – 1.71)	2.19 (1.56 – 3.08)***
Serving status		
Serving		
Left	1.04 (0.84 – 1.28)	0.66 (0.58 – 0.81)***

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, ***p <0.001; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Global relationship functioning

Distribution of global relationship functioning by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Of the 5171 married UK military personnel, global relationship functioning composite scores were available for 4923 (95.2%). When examining only those who are married, there is a slightly higher prevalence of 0 scores; over half of married UK military personnel report positive relationship functioning across all three relationship outcome measures (55.7%). 3.4% report negative relationship functioning across all three relationship outcome measures (a score of 3).

Regression models: Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning

A significant predictive model was built; a total of 4501 cases were analysed and the full model is significantly reliable ($F(30, 4471) = 6.53$, $df = 5000$, $p < 0.0001$) (table 37). Adjusted MORs indicate that scoring 3 is associated with childhood family relationship adversity, deploying for more than 13 months in three years, and still serving at questionnaire completion.

When looking at just those who are married, engagement type is no longer associated with global relationship functioning. As with discussing divorce or separation, this indicates that being a regular has more effect on the relationships of unmarried personnel compared to being a reserve, whereas for married personnel there is no difference between being a regular or a reserve in terms of the effect on relationships. Childhood antisocial behaviour is significantly associated with scoring 3 when looking at all relationship types but not when looking at married personnel only; this

could be a problem with power as there are only 37 participants who scored 3 for global relationship functioning and reported childhood antisocial behaviour.

Table 37 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning amongst married UK military

Demographics	Global relationship functioning score		
	1	2	3
Socio-demographics			
Age (years)	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)***	0.97 (0.95 – 0.99)**	0.97 (0.94 – 1.00)
Childhood family relationship adversity			
0			
1	1.05 (0.85 – 1.29)	1.08 (078 – 1.50)	1.39 (0.79 – 2.44)
2+	1.37 (1.15 – 1.64)***	1.39 (1.05 – 1.85)*	1.98 (1.22 – 3.18)**
Childhood antisocial behaviour			
No	1.33 (1.06 – 1.68)**	1.44 (1.05 – 1.90)*	1.48 (0.87 – 2.51)
Parental status			
No			
Yes	1.25 (1.06 – 1.48)**	1.62 (1.23 – 2.14)***	1.28 (0.82 – 2.00)
Military characteristics			
Rank			
Officer	1.38 (1.15 – 1.65)***	0.87 (0.64 – 1.18)	1.25 (0.77 – 2.01)
NCO			
Other rank	0.94 (0.70 – 1.26)	0.94 (0.61 – 1.46)	0.77 (0.34 – 1.76)
Deployment status			
No			
Yes	0.86 (0.73 – 1.02)	1.31 (1.01 – 1.70)*	1.00 (0.63 – 1.58)
Time deployed in last 3 years			
Less than 13 months			
13 + months	1.97 (1.44 – 2.69)***	2.18 (1.43 – 3.33)***	2.04 (1.04 – 4.00)*
Serving status			
Serving			
Left	0.67 (0.55 – 0.83)***	0.87 (0.63 – 1.21)	0.46 (2.49 – 0.86)*

NB: 0 score is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Summary: Married personnel (comparison with all relationship types)

The distributions of responses to each outcome measure are similar to the distribution when looking at all relationship types, although for some measures there is a slight increase in positive responses, indicating that married relationships of military personnel may be more resilient than unmarried relationships.

For those marriages that do experience problems, childhood family relationship adversity continues to be associated with relationship satisfaction, reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship and scoring 3 on the measure of global relationship functioning. When investigating all relationship types, parental status is only associated with two of the four relationship outcomes. However, when investigating just those who are married, having children is associated with all of the relationship outcomes.

Examining only married personnel and responses to discussing divorce or separation in the last year, changed associations with engagement type; being a regular was no longer associated. This indicates that being a regular is a more pertinent factor contributing to relationship instability for those who are in unmarried compared to married relationships.

Associations between socio-demographic and military characteristics and impact of military career on relationship also changed. Being male, regular, and still serving changed from being associated with reporting a negative impact to being associated with both a negative and a positive impact. It is suggested that this may indicate that these factors are particularly pertinent in terms of having a negative impact for unmarried couples rather than married couples.

Similar to discussing divorce or separation, being a regular was also no longer associated with global relationship functioning, further suggesting that this may be a more pertinent risk factor for unmarried personnel rather than married personnel.

Table 38 presents a summary of the factors associated with the four relationship outcomes for married only UK military personnel.

Table 38 Results summary: Married personnel

	Relationship dissatisfaction	Discussed Divorce or Separation	Negative Impact of Military Career on Relationship	Global relationship functioning score of 3 (most at risk)
Socio-demographics				
Age	-	-	Younger	
Gender	-	-	-	-
Childhood family relationship adversity	✓	-	✓	✓
Childhood antisocial behaviour	-	✓	✓	-
Parental status	Children	Children	Children	-
Military Characteristics				
Service	-	Army	-	-
Rank	-	NCO	Officer	-
Engagement type	Reserve	-	-	-
Deployment status	-	Deployed	-	-
Time deployed in last three years	-	-	13 months+	13 months+
Serving status	-	-	-	Serving

Chapter summary

Examining the prevalence of relationship difficulties across four relationship outcomes indicates that the majority of the UK military have resilient relationships, although married personnel's relationships appear to be more resilient than those in unmarried relationships. Being in a long term relationship compared to being married is associated with all relationship outcomes and therefore a key factor associated with relationship difficulties for UK military personnel.

Consistent with hypothesis i) childhood family relationship adversity is consistently associated with all relationship outcomes for both married and unmarried relationships. Childhood antisocial behaviour is also associated with three of the relationship outcomes.

When examining all relationship types, having children is associated with relationship dissatisfaction and discussing divorce or separation in the last year. For those who are married, having children is associated with all relationship outcomes except a score of 3 on global relationship functioning.

Providing partial support for hypothesis ii) deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period is associated with reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship and with a score of 3 on global relationship functioning. Serving compared to left service is also associated with these two relationship outcomes. These are the only two military characteristics consistently associated with more than one relationship outcome.

Being a regular is associated with discussing divorce or separation and global relationship functioning when looking at all relationship types. However, this is no longer associated when only looking at married personnel, indicating that being a regular is a particular factor increasing the likelihood of relationship difficulties for unmarried personnel.

A summary of the key factors associated with relationship difficulties for UK military personnel is shown in table 39.

Table 39 Summary of key factors associated with each relationship type

	All relationships	Married	Unmarried
Socio-demographics			
	Long term relationship (4) Childhood family relationship adversity (4) Childhood antisocial behaviour (3)		
		Children (3)	
Military characteristics			
	Deployed for 13months+ (2) Serving (2)		
			Regular (2)

NB: numbers in parentheses represent the total number of relationship outcomes the particular factor is associated with

CHAPTER 5: ARE DEPLOYMENT-RELATED EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES?

So far the results from my thesis indicate that deployment per se is not associated with relationship satisfaction, or impact of military career on relationship, however, there is an association between deployment status and relationship stability (discussing divorce or separation in the last year) and global relationship functioning. Deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period is associated with impact of military career on relationship and global relationship functioning.

In this results chapter, associations between deployment-related experiences and relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, impact of military career on relationship, global relationship functioning, and an additional relationship outcome measure, relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment, are investigated. It is hypothesised that combat exposure and/or combat role will be associated with relationship difficulties.

A sub-sample of the KCMHR cohort sample is used for this analysis and includes those participants who had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan and were in a relationship at the time of questionnaire completion (n= 3691).

For each outcome measure, the stages of analysis include:

- Identification of the socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with each relationship outcome in this deployed only sample
- Distribution of each relationship outcome by specific deployment-related experiences
- Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) or Odds Ratios (ORs) presented for associations between each relationship outcome and deployment-related experiences adjusted for the previously identified socio-demographic and military characteristics
- Fully adjusted predictive model of associations between deployment-related experiences and each relationship outcome (adjusted for the previously identified socio-demographic and military characteristics and significantly associated deployment-related experiences)

A summary of the key results from these analyses is presented at the end of the chapter.

Relationship satisfaction and specific deployment-related experiences

Of the 3691 participants meeting the inclusion criteria for this study 3604 (97.6%) responded to the relationship satisfaction question. The majority (86.9%) report being satisfied with their relationship; this is representative of the overall sample (table 40). A new multivariable multinomial regression model was built before investigating the association between relationship satisfaction and deployment-related experiences.

Table 40 Relationship satisfaction responses: comparison between deployed sub-sample and overall sample

Relationship satisfaction	Overall sample		Deployed sample	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Satisfied	6473	86.8	3127	86.9
Neither	585	7.6	280	7.5
Dissatisfied	409	5.6	197	5.6

NB: percentages are weighted

Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction

Unadjusted MORs show that childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, engagement type, and serving status, are associated with relationship satisfaction (table 41).

Table 41 Unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction (deployed only sample)

	Relationship satisfaction	
Demographics	**Neither satisfied or dissatisfied**	**Dissatisfied**
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	0.99 (0.97 – 1.01)	1.01 (0.99 – 1.03)
Gender		
Male		
Female	0.95 (0.52 – 1.73)	0.83 (0.41 – 1.71)
Education		
No qualifications	0.63 (0.34 – 1.15)	1.41 (0.76 – 2.62)
GCSE's/A-Levels		
Degree or higher	0.82 (0.55 – 1.22)	0.98 (0.63 – 1.54)
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.52 (1.00 - 2.31)*	1.18 (0.70 – 1.97)
2+	2.01 (1.43 - 2.85)***	1.78 (1.20 – 2.64)**
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No		
Yes	1.58 (1.12 – 2.23)**	0.98 (0.62 – 1.55)
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	1.20 (0.80 – 1.82)	0.87 (0.50 – 1.52)
Long term relationship	1.50 (1.05 – 2.15)*	1.51 (0.99 – 2.28)
Parental status		
No		
Yes	1.06 (0.79 – 1.42)	1.27 (0.89 – 1.80)
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	0.78 (0.45 – 1.37)	1.43 (0.84 – 2.45)
Army		
RAF	0.90 (0.62 – 1.30)	0.94 (0.58 – 1.54)
Rank		
Officer	0.68 (0.45 – 1.02)	1.08 (0.72 – 1.63)
NCO		
Other rank	1.12 (0.79 – 1.61)	0.91 (0.55 – 1.50)
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.05 (0.63 – 1.74)	1.80 (1.05 – 3.09)
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	1.04 (0.69 – 1.55)	1.51 (0.93 – 2.45)
Serving status *		
Serving		
Left	2.00 (1.34 – 3.00)	0.94 (0.50 – 1.76)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted; * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

Variables shown to be significantly associated with relationship satisfaction were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Childhood antisocial behaviour (Wald test; $F(2, 3485) = 1.43$, $p = 0.2390$) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model.

A significant predictive model of relationship satisfaction includes childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, and serving status. A total of 3051 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (12, 3484) = 3.94, df = 3494, p = <0.0001) (table 42).

Table 42 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction (deployed only sample)

	Relationship satisfaction	
Demographics	**Neither satisfied or dissatisfied**	**Dissatisfied**
Socio-demographics		
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.51 (0.99 – 2.29)	1.17 (0.70 – 1.97)
2+	2.01 (1.42 – 2.85)***	1.75 (1.18 – 2.59)**
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	1.05 (0.68 – 1.61)	0.83 (0.46 – 1.49)
Long term relationship	1.46 (1.01 – 2.11)*	1.42 (0.93 – 2.17)
Military characteristics		
Engagement Type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.05 (0.63 – 1.77)	1.99 (1.16 – 3.45)**
Serving status		
Serving		
Left	2.12 (1.40 – 3.22)***	0.92 (0.78 – 1.78)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted; * p < 0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p < 0.001; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted MORs indicate that relationship dissatisfaction is significantly associated with childhood family relationship adversity and being a reserve. Reporting neither satisfied nor dissatisfied is associated with childhood family relationship adversity, having left service, and being in a long term relationship compared to being married. The factors shown to be associated with relationship satisfaction in the deployed only group are the same as those for all participants in a relationship regardless of deployment status (as shown in results chapter 4, page 119), except having children is not associated in the deployed only group in this results chapter. The variables shown to be significantly associated with relationship satisfaction are included in all future

analysis of relationship satisfaction and deployment-related experiences whilst using this specific sub-sample (in a relationship and deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan).

Distribution of deployment experiences by relationship satisfaction

Table 43 shows the distribution of deployment-related experiences by relationship satisfaction responses.

Table 43 Distribution of deployment experiences by relationship satisfaction: total number and percentages are presented (except for combat exposure where mean and 95% confidence intervals are presented)

Deployment experiences	Relationship satisfaction		
	Satisfied % (n)	Neither % (n)	Dissatisfied % (n)
Total	86.9 (3127)	7.5 (280)	5.6 (197)
Last deployment location			
Iraq	87.1 (1721)	7.3 (155)	5.6 (114)
Afghanistan	86.6 (1406)	8.0 (125)	5.4 (83)
Total Number of deployments			
1	86.8 (1335)	7.2 (107)	6.0 (91
2	87.3 (1186)	7.5 (112)	5.2 (77)
3+	86.1 (606)	8.9 (61)	5.0 (29)
Combat Role			
Combat	85.3 (629)	7.9 (62)	6.8 (48)
Combat support	90.1 (384)	5.6 (26)	4.3 (22)
Combat service support	86.8 (2039)	7.8 (183)	5.4 (121)
Work matched trade, experiences, ability			
Yes	87.7 (2602)	7.0 (216)	5.3 (152)
No, generally above my ability	82.0 (255)	11.1 (31)	6.9 (22)
No, generally below my ability	84.6 (204)	8.0 (21)	7.4 (17)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death			
Never	89.3 (494)	6.0 (37)	4.7 (32)
Once or twice	87.2 (832)	7.9 (71)	4.9 (44)
Sometimes	86.7 (836)	8.0 (83)	5.3 (47)
Many times	86.1 (905)	7.1 (77)	6.8 (70)
Time in a hostile area			
Not at all	87.5 (884)	7.1 (81)	5.4 (60)
Up to one week	85.4 (643)	7.8 (51)	6.8 (41)
One week to one month	89.3 (619)	6.4 (48)	4.3 (36)
More than a month	86.6 (881)	8.1 (86)	5.3 (52)
Combat exposure	18.3 (17.5 – 19.1)	19.8 (16.9– 22.7)	22.9 (18.8 – 27.0)
Support for personal problems from unit			
Agree	88.4 (1765)	7.0 (145)	4.6 (95)
Neither	87.3 (738)	8.2 (73)	4.5 (41)
Disagree	82.7 (533)	7.8 (52)	9.5 (56)
Seniors were interested in what I did			
Agree	88.9 (2109)	6.4 (173)	4.7 (110)
Neither	85.8 (571)	8.9 (56)	5.3 (36)
Disagree	79.3 (382)	10.5 (41)	10.2 (46)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit			
Agree	88.8 (2182)	6.7 (177)	4.5 (118)
Neither	84.1 (509)	9.9 (56)	6.0 (38)
Disagree	81.3 (367)	8.5 (37)	10.2 (63)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed			
Disagree	88.7 (2734)	7.0 (218)	4.3 (140)
Agree	74.5 (292)	10.5 (47)	15.0 (51)
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away			
Yes, and it was enough	89.6 (960)	6.8 (72)	3.6 (42)
Yes, but it was not enough	85.4 (585)	7.8 (51)	6.8 (46)
No, no support was provided	84.2 (822)	8.2 (92)	7.6 (67)
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed			
Disagree	87.5 (2907)	7.3 (251)	5.2 (177)
Agree	78.0 (117)	8.6 (14)	13.4 (15)
Did you received a verbal homecoming			
No	84.6 (1350)	9.4 (149)	6.0 (99)
Yes	78.0 (1614)	8.6 (113)	13.4 (86)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; Percentages are weighted

Multinomial Odds Ratios adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics

Adjusted MORs (adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, engagement type, serving status, and relationship type) indicate that relationship dissatisfaction is associated with (table 44):

- Feeling you could not go to others in the unit with personal problems
- Feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing
- Feeling uninformed about what was happing in your unit
- Did not receive enough support from family whilst deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide enough or any support for your spouse whilst you were deployed

Table 44 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and relationship satisfaction (adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics)

	Relationship Satisfaction	
Deployment experiences	**Neither**	**Dissatisfied**
Last deployment location		
Iraq		
Afghanistan	1.16 (0.85 – 1.57)	0.97 (0.67 – 1.4)
Total Number of deployments		
1		
2	1.03 (0.73 – 1.44)	0.94 (0.64 – 1.40)
3+	1.31 (0.88 – 1.94)	0.88 (0.52 – 1.50)
Combat Role		
Combat	0.97 (0.66 - 1.39)	1.26 (0.81 – 1.95)
Combat support	0.71 (0.42 – 1.21)	0.85 (0.49 – 1.47)
Combat service support		
Work matched trade, experiences, ability		
Yes		
No, generally above my ability	1.65 (1.00 – 2.71)*	1.43 (0.83 – 2.47)
No, generally below my ability	1.06 (0.58 – 1.95)	1.56 (0.82 – 2.95)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death		
Never		
Once or twice	1.22 (0.73 – 2.03)	1.26 (0.71 – 2.24)
Sometimes	1.19 (0.72 – 1.97)	1.32 (0.75 – 2.32)
Many times	1.08 (0.64 – 1.81)	1.54 (0.90 – 2.64)
Time in a hostile area		
Not at all		
Up to one week	0.95 (0.61 – 1.49)	1.40 (0.75 – 2.30)
One week to one month	0.85 (0.54 – 1.33)	0.83 (0.49 – 1.39)
More than a month	0.98 (0.66 – 1.47)	0.93 (0.57 – 1.51)
Combat exposure	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)	1.00 (0.99 – 1.02)
Support for personal problems from unit		
Agree		
Neither	1.21 (0.85 – 1.74)	0.86 (0.54 – 1.38)
Disagree	1.15 (0.77 – 1.70)	2.06 (1.34 – 3.14)***
Seniors were interested in what I did		
Agree		
Neither	1.40 (0.95 – 2.05)	1.14 (0.71 – 1.84)
Disagree	1.46 (0.94 – 2.27)	2.21 (1.39 – 3.51)***
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit		
Agree		
Neither	1.48 (1.01 – 25.18)*	1.40 (0.87 – 2.25)
Disagree	1.21 (0.77 – 1.89)	1.99 (1.21 – 3.28)**
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.73 (1.14 – 2.62)*	4.04 (2.66 – 6.14)***
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away		
Yes, and it was enough		
Yes, but it was not enough	1.10 (0.69 – 1.74)	1.74 (1.03 – 2.94)*
No, no support was provided	1.14 (0.76 – 1.72)	1.98 (1.22 – 3.20)**
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.22 (0.65 – 2.30)	2.28 (1.10 – 4.72)*
Did you received a verbal homecoming		
No		
Yes	0.53 (0.38 – 0.72)***	0.72 (0.49 – 1.05)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, and serving status

Full adjusted model: Deployment-related experiences and relationship satisfaction

The deployment-related experiences shown (table 44) to be significantly associated with relationship satisfaction were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model adjusting for the previously identified socio-demographic and military characteristics. Work matching trade, experience and ability (Wald test: F (4, 2509) = 0.76, p = 0.5493), feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing (Wald test: F (4, 2521) = 0.52, p = 0.7195), feeling uninformed about what was happening in your unit (Wald test: F (4, 2522) = 1.71, p = 0.1449), having financial problems at home whilst deployed (Wald test; F (2, 3236) = 0.67, p = 0.5135), and perceptions of the level of support provided by the military for your spouse (Wald test; F (4, 2522) = 0.77, p = 0.5448) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model. A total of 3253 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (20, 3233) = 5.62, df = 3252, p <0.0001) (table 45).

Table 45 Full Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for the associations between deployment-related experiences and relationship satisfaction

	Relationship Satisfaction	
Deployment experiences	**Neither satisfied or dissatisfied**	**Dissatisfied**
Support for personal problems from unit		
Agree		
Neither	1.14 (0.79 – 1.65)	0.91 (0.57 – 1.46)
Disagree	0.98 (0.64 – 1.49)	1.88 (1.21 – 2.91)**
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.65 (1.08 – 2.52)*	3.42 (2.22 – 5.25)***
Did you received a verbal homecoming		
No		
Yes	0.53 (0.39 – 0.74)***	0.79 (0.54 – 1.17)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for relationship satisfaction analysis; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p < 0.001; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, engagement type, serving status, relationship type, and all variables in the model

Adjusted MORs indicate (table 45) that for those who were in a relationship and have deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan reporting relationship dissatisfaction is associated with:

- Feeling you could not go to anyone in your unit for support with your personal problems
- Did not receive enough support from family whilst deployed

Relationship stability (discussing divorce or separation in the last year) and specific deployment-related experiences

Of the 3691 participants meeting the inclusion criteria for this study, 3408 (92.3%) responded to the question have you or your spouse seriously discussed divorce or separation in the last year. The majority (78.7%) of these participants have not discussed divorce or separation in the last year (table 46). This distribution of responses is similar to the overall sample although there is a slightly higher prevalence of participants reporting having discussed divorce or separation in the last year in the deployed only group (table 46).

Table 46 Discussed divorce or separation in the last year response distribution comparison between deployed sub-sample and overall sample

Discussed divorce	Overall Sample		Deployed sample (results chapter 7)	
	n	%	n	%
No	5840	81.9	2720	78.7
Yes	1284	18.1	688	21.3

NB: percentages are weighted

Associations between discussing divorce or separation in the last year and socio-demographic and military characteristics were re-examined for the sub-sample

included in this study. A new multivariable logistic regression model was built before investigating the association between discussing divorce or separation and deployment-related experiences.

Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship stability (discussing divorce or separation in the last year)

Unadjusted Odds Ratios (ORs) show that age, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, having children, service, and rank, are associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year (table 47).

Table 47 Unadjusted Odds Ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year (deployed only sample)

Demographics	Discussed Divorce: Yes
Socio-demographics	
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)***
Gender	
Male	
Female	0.66 (0.44 – 01.02)
Education	
No qualifications	0.95 (0.64 – 1.42)
GCSE's/A-Levels	
Degree or higher	0.62 (0.47 – 0.81)***
Childhood family relationship adversity	
0	
1	1.24 (0.93 – 1.64)
2+	1.55 (1.23 – 1.95)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour	
No	
Yes	1.89 (1.50 – 2.39)***
Relationship type	
Married	
Co-habiting	1.34 (1.00 – 1.78)**
Long term relationship	1.73 (1.34 – 2.24)*
Parental status	
No	
Yes	1.36 (1.11 – 1.67)***
Military characteristics	
Service	
Naval services	0.81 (0.57 – 1.15)
Army	
RAF	0.66 (0.50 – 0.86)***
Rank	
Officer	0.64 (0.49 – 0.84)**
NCO	
Other rank	1.08 (0.83 – 1.40)
Engagement type	
Regular	
Reserve	0.74 (0.50 – 1.11)
Time deployed in last 3 years	
Less than 13 months	
13 + months	1.21 (0.89 – 1.64)
Serving Status	
Serving	
Left	1.30 (0.95 – 1.78)

NB: No is used as reference category for all analyses; ORs are weighted: * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

The socio-demographic and military characteristics significantly associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year were included in a multivariable logistic regression model. A total of 3307 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable ($F (6, 3301) = 10.30$, $df = 3306$, $p = <0.0001$) (table 48).

Table 48 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year (deployed only sample)

Demographics	Discussed divorce: Yes
Socio-demographics	
Childhood family relationship adversity	
0	
1	1.19 (0.89 – 1.60)
2+	1.31 (1.03 – 1.67)*
Childhood antisocial behaviour	
No	
Yes	1.56 (1.22 – 2.01)***
Relationship type	
Married	
Co-habiting	1.62 (1.19 – 2.21)**
Long term relationship	2.34 (1.73 – 3.17)***
Parental status	
No	
Yes	1.81 (1.41 – 2.32)***

NB: No is used as reference category for all analyses; ORs are weighted; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; † adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted ORs indicate that for participants who were in a relationship and had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, discussing divorce or separation in the last year is significantly associated with childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, being more likely to be co-habiting or in a long term relationship compared to being married, and having children.

Distribution of deployment-related experiences by discussing divorce or separation

The distribution of deployment-related experiences by discussing divorce or separation in the last year are shown in table 49.

Table 49 Distribution of deployment-related experiences by discussing divorce or separation: numbers and percentages are presented (except for combat exposure where mean and 95%confidence intervals are presented)

Deployment experiences	Discussed divorce	
	No % (n)	Yes % (n)
Total	78.7 (2720)	21.3 (688)
Last deployment location		
Iraq	77.6 (1471)	22.4 (401)
Afghanistan	80.4 (1249)	19.6 (287)
Total Number of deployments		
1	78.2 (1129)	21.8 (309)
2	79.0 (1041)	21.0 (260)
3+	79.4 (550)	20.6 (119)
Combat Role		
Combat	75.0 (506)	25.0 (170)
Combat support	83.6 (348)	16.4 (66)
Combat service support	79.0 (1794)	21.0 (433)
Work matched trade, experiences, ability		
Yes	80.2 (2284)	19.8 (530)
No, generally above my ability	66.7 (201)	33.3 (84)
No, generally below my ability	76.1 (173)	23.9 (53)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death		
Never	84.4 (455)	15.6 (84)
Once or twice	80.3 (730)	19.7 (170)
Sometimes	79.1 (735)	20.9 (181)
Many times	74.3 (745)	25.7 (233)
Time in a hostile area		
Not at all	81.9 (807)	18.1 (175)
Up to one week	76.6 (553)	23.4 (144)
One week to one month	81.7 (541)	18.3 (123)
More than a month	75.5 (731)	24.5 (217)
Combat exposure	17.4 (16.5 – 18.4)	21.5 (19.6 – 23.4)
Support for personal problems from unit		
Agree	80.1 (1520)	19.9 (366)
Neither	78.3 (643)	21.7 (169)
Disagree	75.8 (496)	24.2 (131)
Seniors were interested in what I did		
Agree	80.9 (1854)	19.1 (413)
Neither	79.5 (489)	23.5 (134)
Disagree	72.3 (320)	27.7 (119)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit		
Agree	80.4 (1910)	19.6 (438)
Neither	76.8 (442)	23.2 (124)
Disagree	73.5 (312)	26.5 (103)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed		
Disagree	80.3 (2386)	19.7 (542)
Agree	68.2 (247)	31.8 (117)
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away		
Yes, and it was enough	82.4 (860)	17.6 (171)
Yes, but it was not enough	75.9 (516)	24.1 (151)
No, no support was provided	74.6 (727)	25.4 (232)
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed		
Disagree	79.7 (2544)	20.3 (611)
Agree	61.7 (85)	38.3 (50)
Did you received a verbal homecoming		
No	78.5 (1223)	21.5 (314)
Yes	78.9 (1349)	21.1 (335)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; Percentages are weighted

Odds Ratios adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics

Adjusted ORs (adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type and having children) show that having discussed divorce or separation in the last year is associated with (table 50):

- Reporting that work was above trade, experience, or ability
- Believing, on many occasions, to be in serious danger of injury or death
- Spending up to one week or spending more than one month in a hostile area
- Combat exposure
- Not feeling you could go to others in your unit for support with personal problems
- Feeling that seniors were not interested in what you did
- Not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide enough or any support for your spouse whilst deployed

Table 50 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and discussing divorce or separation

Deployment experiences	Discussed divorce: Yes
Last deployment location	
Iraq	
Afghanistan	0.84 (0.78 – 1.03)
Total Number of deployments	
1	
2	0.97 (0.77 – 1.22)
3+	0.93 (0.69 – 1.24)
Combat Role	
Combat	1.12 (0.86 – 1.44)
Combat support	0.75 (0.53 – 1.07)
Combat service support	
Work matched trade, experiences, ability	
Yes	
No, generally above my ability	1.86 (1.33 – 2.60)***
No, generally below my ability	1.26 (0.84 – 1.88)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death	
Never	
Once or twice	1.21 (0.85 – 1.73)
Sometimes	1.37 (0.97 – 1.93)
Many times	1.60 (1.14 – 2.25)**
Time in a hostile area	
Not at all	
Up to one week	1.42 (1.05 – 1.92)*
One week to one month	0.95 (0.69 – 1.31)
More than a month	1.22 (0.92 – 1.62)
Combat exposure	1.01 (1.00 – 1.01)**
Support for personal problems from unit	
Agree	
Neither	1.08 (0.84 – 1.40)
Disagree	1.32 (1.00 – 1.72)*
Seniors were interested in what I did	
Agree	
Neither	1.17 (0.89 – 1.52)
Disagree	1.49 (1.11 – 1.99)**
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit	
Agree	
Neither	1.15 (0.88 – 1.52)
Disagree	1.25 (0.91 – 1.70)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed	
Disagree	
Agree	1.80 (1.33 – 2.42)***
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away	
Yes, and it was enough	
Yes, but it was not enough	1.46 (1.08 – 1.97)*
No, no support was provided	1.52 (1.15 – 2.01)**
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed	
Disagree	
Agree	2.09 (1.30 – 3.37)**
Did you received a verbal homecoming	
No	
Yes	0.87 (0.70 – 1.08)

NB: No is used as reference; ORs are weighted;. * p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001† adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, and having children.

Full adjusted model: Deployment-related experiences and discussing divorce or separation in the last year

The deployment-related experiences significantly associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year (table 50) were put into a multivariable logistic regression model. Believing that you were in serious danger of injury or death (Wald test: F (3, 2480) = 0.87, p = 0.4547), time spent in a hostile area (Wald test: F (3, 2482) = 1.62, p = 0.1829), not feeling you could go to others in your unit for support with personal problems (Wald test: F (2, 2516) = 0.72, p = 0.4874), and feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing (Wald test: F (2, 2518) = 0.38, p = 0.6852) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model. A total of 2521 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (13, 2509) = 8.64, df = 2521, p <0.0001) (table 51).

Table 51 Full adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and discussing divorce or separation in the last year

Deployment experiences	Discussed divorce: Yes
Work matched trade, experiences, ability	
Yes	
No, generally above my ability	1.92 (1.32 – 2.79)***
No, generally below my ability	1.12 (0.69 – 1.82)
Combat exposure	1.01 (1.00 – 1.02)*
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed	
Disagree	
Agree	1.43 (1.01 – 2.02)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away	
Yes, and it was enough	
Yes, but it was not enough	1.33 (0.97 – 1.83)
No, no support was provided	1.41 (1.06 – 1.88)*
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed	
Disagree	
Agree	2.50 (1.46 – 4.26)***

NB: No is used as reference; ORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p < 0.001; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, and all variables in the table

In the final model having discussed divorce or separation in the last year is associated with:

- Feeling that your work was generally above your trade, experience and ability
- Combat exposure
- Feeling that your family did not provide enough personal support whilst you were deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Perceiving the military to have not provided any support to your spouse whilst deployed

Impact of military career on relationship and specific deployment-related experiences

Of the 3691 participants meeting the inclusion criteria for this study, 3486 (94.4%) responded to the perceived impact of military career on relationship question. 48.0% report a negative impact of their military career on their relationship, 29.2% no impact and 22.7% positive impact (table 52). In comparison to the overall sample, the distribution for the deployed only sample is similar but there is a higher prevalence of negative impact responses (table 52). Deployment status is not shown to be significantly associated with reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship in results chapter 4, however, there does appear to be a slightly increased frequency of reporting in the deployed sample. A new multivariable multinomial regression model was built before investigating the association between impact of career on relationship and specific deployment-related experiences.

Table 52 Impact of military career on relationship response distribution comparison between deployed sub-sample and overall sample

Impact of military career on relationship	Overall sample		Deployed sample	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
No Impact	2280	32.2	1011	29.2
Positive	1806	25.2	807	22.7
Negative	3111	42.6	1668	48.1

NB: percentages are weighted

Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with impact of career on relationship

Unadjusted MORs show that age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years, are associated with impact of career on relationship (table 53).

Table 53 Unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with impact of career on relationship (deployed only sample)

Demographics	Impact of career on relationship	
	Positive impact	**Negative impact**
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	1.01 (1.00 – 1.02)*	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)***
Gender		
Male		
Female	0.43 (0.28 – 0.67)***	0.58 (0.41 – 0.73)**
Education		
No qualifications	0.81 (0.50 – 1.31)	0.75 (0.49 – 1.15)
GCSE's/A-Levels		
Degree or higher	0.72 (0.54 – 0.95)*	1.04 (0.81 – 1.32)
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.09 (0.81 – 1.47)	1.00 (0.78 – 1.290
2+	0.92 (0.71 – 1.19)	1.36 (1.10 – 1.69)**
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No		
Yes	1.13 (0.84 – 1.52)	0.79 (0.63 – 1.00)
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	0.90 (0.64 – 1.27)	1.44 (1.09 – 1.89)**
Long term relationship	0.66 (0.47 – 0.90)**	1.58 (1.24 – 2.01)***
Parental status		
No		
Yes	1.28 (1.02 – 1.60)*	0.94 (0.74 – 1.14)
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	0.88 (0.59 – 1.30)	1.04 (0.75 – 1.43)
Army		
RAF	0.72 (0.54 – 0.95)*	0.75 (0.58 – 0.95)*
Rank		
Officer	1.34 (1.03 – 1.77)*	1.03 (0.72 – 1.31)
NCO		
Other rank	1.08 (0.79 – 1.47)	1.29 (1.00 – 1.66)*
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.42 (0.99 – 2.05)*‡	0.54 (0.37 – 0.78)***
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	1.17 (0.79 – 1.72)	2.26 (1.68 – 3.05)***
Serving Status		
Serving		
Left	1.09 (0.77 – 1.54)	0.78 (0.57 – 1.07)

NB: No impact is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; ‡ $p = 0.059$

Unadjusted variables significantly associated with impact of military career on relationship were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Rank (Wald: F (4, 3145) = 1.26, p = 0.2854), service (Wald: F(4, 3145) = 1.47, p = 0.2097) and parental status (Wald: F(2,2147) = 0.30, p 0.7409) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model. A total of 3149 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (20, 3129) = 7.61, df = 3148, p <0.000) (table 54).

Table 54 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with impact of military career on relationship (deployed only sample)

Demographics	**Impact of career on relationship**	
	Positive impact	**Negative impact**
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	1.01 (0.99 – 1.02)‡	0.97 (0.96 – 0.99)**
Gender		
Male		
Female	0.44 (0.27 – 0.69)***	0.51 (0.35 – 0.75)***
Education		
No qualifications	0.75 (0.44 – 1.27)	0.45 (0.30 – 0.77)*
GCSE's/A-Levels		
Degree or higher	0.73 (0.54 – 0.99)*	0.79 (0.61 – 1.03)
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0		
1	1.21 (0.88 – 1.64)	1.02 (0.78 – 1.33)
2+	0.96 (0.73 – 1.27)	1.46 (1.16 – 1.83)***
Relationship type		
Married		
Co-habiting	0.88 (0.61 – 1.28)	1.21 (0.89 – 1.65)
Long term relationship	0.70 (0.48 – 1.01)	1.36 (1.02 – 1.81)*
Military characteristics		
Engagement type		
Regular		
Reserve	1.40 (0.92 – 2.14)	0.57 (0.38 – 0.86)**
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months		
13 + months	1.27 (0.86 – 1.89)	1.82 (1.34 – 2.78)***

NB: No impact used as reference category for all analyses; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001, ‡p = 0.488; †MORs adjusted for all variables in the table; MORs are weighted

Adjusted MORs indicate that reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship is significantly associated with being younger, educated to GCSEs or A-Levels, childhood family relationship adversity, being in a long term relationship compared to being married, being regular personnel, and deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period. Reporting a positive impact is associated with being less likely to be educated to degree level or above. Being male is associated with reporting both a positive and negative impact.

In this deployed only sample, service, rank, serving status, and parental status are no longer associated, compared to investigations with all military personnel, in a relationship, regardless of deployment status (chapter 4, page 129). The variables shown to be significantly associated with impact of military career on relationship are included in all future analysis of impact of military career on relationship and deployment-related experiences whilst using this specific sub-sample.

Distribution of deployment-related experiences by impact of military career on relationship

Table 55 shows the distribution of deployment-related experiences by impact of military career on relationship.

Table 55 Distribution of deployment-related experiences by impact of military career on relationship: numbers and percentages are presented (except for combat exposure where mean and 95% confidence intervals are presented)

Deployment experiences	Impact of career on relationship		
	No Impact % (n)	Positive Impact % (n)	Negative Impact % (n)
Total	29.2 (1011)	22.7 (807)	48.1 (1668)
Last deployment location			
Iraq	29.7 (579)	23.2 (437)	47.1 (900)
Afghanistan	28.5 (432)	22.0 (370)	49.5 (798)
Total Number of deployments			
1	29.0 (407)	23.9 (360)	47.1 (706)
2	30.5 (406)	22.7 (307)	46.8 (623)
3+	27.0 (198)	19.4 (140)	53.6 (339)
Combat Role			
Combat	25.6 (177)	21.0 (133)	53.4 (394)
Combat support	32.1 (128)	19.6 (75)	48.3 (219)
Combat service support	30.0 (684)	23.8 (573)	46.2 (1017)
Work matched trade, experiences, ability			
Yes	30.7 (873)	22.9 (669)	46.4 (1329)
No, generally above my ability	19.0 (62)	20.5 (60)	60.5 (175)
No, generally below my ability	23.8 (56)	24.9 (60)	51.3 (121)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death			
Never	35.2 (188)	21.6 (128)	43.2 (232)
Once or twice	30.0 (275)	24.9 (128)	45.1 (232)
Sometimes	28.7 (273)	24.1 (230)	47.2 (439)
Many times	26.1 (257)	20.2 (210)	53.7 (535)
Time in a hostile area			
Not at all	34.0 (330)	22.9 (242)	43.1 (431)
Up to one week	29.3 (216)	25.4 (177)	45.3 (317)
One week to one month	28.1 (188)	20.8 (143)	51.1 (345)
More than a month	25.2 (245)	22.1 (218)	52.7 (515)
Combat exposure	16.6 (15.2 – 18.0)	17.3 (15.8 – 18.8)	20.4 (19.2 – 21.7)
Support for personal problems from unit			
Agree	31.4 (585)	25.1 (497)	43.5 (855)
Neither	28.5 (248)	19.6 (163)	51.9 (413)
Disagree	23.9 (154)	19.7 (127)	56.4 (360)
Seniors were interested in what I did			
Agree	30.3 (704)	25.2 (582)	44.5 (1026)
Neither	28.8 (179)	18.1 (124)	53.1 (341)
Disagree	24.6 (106)	17.3 (84)	58.1 (261)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit			
Agree	30.2 (718)	25.6 (616)	44.2 (1059)
Neither	30.9 (175)	18.0 (105)	51.1 (304)
Disagree	21.6 (94)	14.5 (70)	63.9 (263)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed			
Disagree	30.7 (909)	23.4 (705)	45.9 (1376)
Agree	20.1 (74)	17.2 (75)	62.7 (229)
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away			
Yes, and it was enough	33.1 (347)	29.7 (302)	37.2 (383)
Yes, but it was not enough	29.1 (185)	21.5 (151)	49.4 (332)
No, no support was provided	25.0 (235)	18.5 (191)	56.5 (531)
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed			
Disagree	30.0 (954)	22.7 (752)	47.3 (1524)
Agree	15.5 (25)	19.8 (26)	64.7 (86)
Did you received a verbal homecoming			
No	28.8 (445)	22.1 (357)	49.1 (754)
Yes	29.8 (516)	23.5 (413)	46.7 (818)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; Percentages are weighted

MORs adjusted for socio-demographics and military characteristics

Adjusted MORs (adjusted for age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years) indicate that reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship is associated with (table 56):

- Work being generally above, trade, experience, or ability
- Spending more than one week in a hostile area
- Feeling you could not go to others in your unit with personal problems
- Feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing
- Did not feel informed about what was happening in your unit
- Did not receive enough personal support from family whilst deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide enough or any support for your spouse whilst deployed

Table 56 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and impact of military career on relationship (adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics)

	Impact of military career on relationship	
Deployment experiences	**Positive impact**	**Negative impact**
Last deployment location		
Iraq		
Afghanistan	0.96 (0.76 – 1.21)	1.01 (0.83 – 1.24)
Total Number of deployments		
1		
2	0.91 (0.70 – 1.17)	0.88 (0.71 – 1.09)
3+	0.83 (0.60 – 1.16)	1.08 (0.83 – 1.41)
Combat Role		
Combat		
Combat support	1.03 (0.75 – 1.42)	1.07 (0.83 – 1.39)
Combat service support	0.85 (0.71 – 1.09)	0.97 (0.72 – 1.31)
Work matched trade, experiences, ability		
Yes		
No, generally above my ability	1.61 (1.01 – 2.56)*	2.00 (1.37 – 2.92)***
No, generally below my ability	1.49 (0.91 – 2.42)	1.47 (0.97 – 2.34)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death		
Never		
Once or twice	1.24 (0.87 – 1.77)	1.07 (0.78 – 1.45)
Sometimes	1.223 (0.86 – 1.77)	1.29 (0.95 – 1.76)
Many times	1.15 (0.79 – 1.65)	1.34 (0.98 – 1.84)
Time in a hostile area		
Not at all		
Up to one week	1.29 (0.93 – 1.78)	1.222 (0.92 – 1.62)
One week to one month	1.06 (0.75 – 1.50)	1.34 (1.00 – 1.78)*
More than a month	1.30 (0.95 – 1.78)	1.38 (1.05 – 1.81)*
Combat exposure	1.00 (0.99 – 1.00)	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)
Support for personal problems from unit		
Agree		
Neither	0.84 (0.63 – 1.13)	1.33 (1.05 – 1.69)
Disagree	1.05 (0.75 – 1.46)	1.91 (1.45 – 2.52)***
Seniors were interested in what I did		
Agree		
Neither	0.75 (0.54 – 1.03)	1.20 (0.93 – 1.55)
Disagree	0.90 (0.61 – 1.34)	1.52 (1.11 – 2.08)**
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit		
Agree		
Neither	0.73 (0.52 – 1.03)	1.10 (0.84 – 1.44)
Disagree	0.80 (0.53 – 1.20)	1.97 (1.39 – 2.64)***
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.03 (0.67 – 1.58)	2.11 (1.51 – 2.95)***
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away		
Yes, and it was enough		
Yes, but it was not enough	0.80 (0.58 – 1.11)	1.41 (1.06 – 1.89)*
No, no support was provided	0.82 (0.59 – 1.13)	1.91 (1.47 – 2.49)***
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.76 (0.86 – 3.63)	2.72 (1.53 – 4.84)***
Did you received a verbal homecoming		
No		
Yes	1.07 (0.84 – 1.37)	0.81 (0.66 -1.00)

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001; † adjusted for age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years

Full adjusted model: Deployment experiences and impact of military career on relationship

The deployment experiences significantly associated with impact of military career on relationship (table 56) were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model adjusting for the previously identified socio-demographic and military characteristics. Feeling you could not go to others in your unit with personal problems (Wald test: $F(4, 2311) = 1.41$, $p = 0.2284$) and feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing (Wald test: $F(4, 2312) = 1.35$, $p = 0.2496$), did not significantly contribute to the model and are not included in the final model. A total of 2318 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable ($F(42, 2276) = 5.07$, $df = 2317$, $p < 0.0001$) (table 57).

Table 57 Full Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experience and impact of military career on relationship

	Impact of military career on relationship	
Deployment experiences	**Positive impact**	**Negative impact**
Work matched trade, experiences, ability		
Yes		
No, generally above my ability	1.37 (0.77 – 2.42)	1.81 (1.14 – 2.87)**
No, generally below my ability	1.23 (0.68 – 2.21)	0.95 (0.57 – 1.58)
Time in a hostile area		
Not at all		
Up to one week	1.27 (0.88 – 1.83)	1.09 (0.78 – 1.52)
One week to one month	1.05 (0.70 – 1.56)	1.53 (1.08 – 2.16)*
More than a month	1.39 (0.96 – 2.03)	1.77 (1.28 – 2.44)***
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit		
Agree		
Neither	0.76 (0.51 – 1.15)	0.99 (0.71 – 1.37)
Disagree	0.73 (0.44 – 1.19)	1.74 (1.18 – 2.56)*
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.04 (0.64 – 1.70)	1.74 (1.18 – 2.56)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away		
Yes, and it was enough		
Yes, but it was not enough	0.81 (0.57 – 1.15)	1.31 (0.97 – 1.78)
No, no support was provided	0.89 (0.64 – 1.25)	1.84 (1.39 – 2.44)***
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed		
Disagree		
Agree	1.55 (0.66 – 3.63)	2.27 (1.15 – 4.49)*

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p < 0.001; † adjusted for age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, time deployed in the last three years, and all variables in the model

In a final model of impact of military career on relationship and deployment-related experiences, adjusted MORs indicated that for those who were in a relationship and had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan reporting military career to have a negative impact on relationship is associated with (table 57):

- Reporting work to generally be above trade, experiences and ability
- Spending one week or more in a hostile area
- Feeling you were not informed about what was happening in your unit
- Did not receive enough personal support from family whilst deployed

- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide any support for your spouse whilst deployed.

Relationship problems as a result of most recent deployment and specific deployment-related experiences

Of the 3691 personnel who had deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan and were in a relationship, 3439 (93.2%) responded to the question "did you have any relationship or family problems as a result of your most recent deployment to either Iraq or Afghanistan". The majority (84.9%) do not report having relationship or family problems as a result of their most recent deployment. Distributions of responses to this measure by socio-demographic and military characteristics are shown in table 58.

Table 58 Numbers and percentages for socio-demographic and military characteristics by relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Demographics	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment?	
	No % (n)	**Yes % (n)**
Total	84.9 (2953)	15.1 (486)
Socio-demographics		
Age at questionnaire completion (years) †	33.6 (33.3 – 33.9)	32.7 (32.0 – 33.5)
Education		
No qualifications	76.7 (172)	23.3 (46)
GCSE's/A-Levels	84.6 (2082)	15.4 (359)
Degree or higher	88.9 (611)	11.1 (70)
Childhood family relationship adversity		
0	89.3 (1296)	10.7 (147)
1	83.6 (571)	16.4 (101)
2+	81.1 (989)	18.9 (218)
Childhood antisocial behaviour		
No	87.8 (2414)	12.2 (318)
Yes	74.4 (489)	25.6 (157)
Relationship type		
Married	85.6 (1898)	14.4 (302)
Co-habiting	84.8 (445)	15.2(66)
Long term relationship	82.5 (610)	17.5 (118)
Parental status		
No	86.6 (1471)	13.4 (209)
Yes	83.6 (1482)	16.4 (277)
Military characteristics		
Service		
Naval services	83.7 (264)	16.2 (52)
Army	84.1 (2068)	15.9 (363)
RAF	88.6 (621)	11.4 (71)
Rank		
Officer	90.1 (399)	9.9 (74)
NCO	84.5 (1693)	15.5 (299)
Other rank	80.9 (561)	19.1 (113)
Time deployed in last 3 years		
Less than 13 months	85.9 (2481)	14.1 (381)
13 + months	79.9 (346)	20.1 (79)
Serving Status		
Serving	85.6 (2665)	14.4 (424)
Left	79.6 (281)	20.4 (62)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; Percentages (%) are weighted; †mean and 95% confidence intervals

Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Unadjusted Odds Ratios (ORs) show that age, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, parental status, service, rank,

deploying for more than 13 months in three years, and serving status, are associated with reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment (table 59).

Table 59 Unadjusted ORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Demographics	Reported relationship or family problems
Socio-demographics	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	
Gender	
Male	
Female	0.82 (0.50 – 1.32)
Education	
No qualifications	1.66 (1.11 – 2.49)*
GCSE's/A-Levels	
Degree or higher	0.69 (0.79 – 0.96)*
Childhood family relationship adversity	
0	
1	1.64 (1.18 – 2.27)**
2+	1.94 (1.48 – 2.55)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour	
No	
Yes	2.48 (1.92 – 3.20)***
Relationship type	
Married	
Co-habiting	1.07 (0.75 – 1.50)
Long term relationship	1.25 (0.95 – 1.67)
Parental status	
No	
Yes	1.27 (1.00 – 1.60)*
Military characteristics	
Service	
Naval services	1.02 (0.70 – 150)
Army	
RAF	0.68 (0.49 – 0.94)*
Rank	
Officer	0.59 (0.43 – 0.82)*
NCO	
Other rank	1.28 (0.96 – 1.70)
Engagement type	
Regular	
Reserve	1.22 (0.81 – 1.86)
Time deployed in last 3 years	
Less than 13 months	
13 + months	1.54 (1.12 – 2.12)**
Serving status	
Serving	
Left	1.52 (1.07 – 2.15)*

NB: No is used as reference category for all analyses; ORs are weighted: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

The characteristics (table 59) significantly associated with reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment were included in a multivariable logistic regression model. Age (Wald test; F (1, 3077) = 0.00, p = 0.0.9664), education (Wald test; F (2, 3076) = 0.73, p = 0.4831), service (Wald test; F (2, 3166) = 0.85, p = 0.4268), rank (Wald test; F (2, 3166) = 2.87, p = 0.0571), serving status (Wald test; F (1, 3167) = 3.05, p = 0.0807), and parental status (Wald test; F (1, 3170) = 1.07, p =0.3011) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model. A total of 3171 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (4, 3167) = 13.87, df = 3170, p <0.0001) (table 60).

Table 60 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Demographics	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment
Socio-demographics	
Childhood family relationship adversity	
0	
1	1.42 (1.01 – 1.99)*
2+	1.50 (1.12 – 2.01)**
Childhood antisocial behaviour*	
No	
Yes	2.14 (1.61 – 2.84)***
Military characteristics	
Time deployed in last 3 years	
Less than 13 months	
13 + months	1.47 (1.05 – 2.05)*

NB: No is used as reference category for all analyses; ORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001; † adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted ORs indicate that childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour and having been deployed for more than 13 months in three years are associated with relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment to either Iraq and/or Afghanistan (table 60). These variables are included in all future analysis investigating associations with specific deployment-related experiences whilst using this specific sub-sample.

Distribution of deployment-related experiences by relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

The distribution of deployment-related experiences by reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment is shown in table 61.

Table 61 Distribution of deployment-related experiences by relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment: numbers and percentages (except for combat exposure where mean and 95% confidence intervals are presented)

Deployment experiences	Relationship/family problems as a result of most recent deployment	
	No % (n)	Yes % (n)
Total	84.9 (2953)	15.1 (486)
Last deployment location		
Iraq	83.5 (1621)	16.5 (292)
Afghanistan	87.3 (1332)	12.7 (194)
Total Number of deployments		
1	84.6 (1271)	15.4 (217)
2	85.6 (1109)	14.4 (192)
3+	84.5 (573)	15.5 (77)
Combat Role		
Combat	79.3 (581)	20.7 (146)
Combat support	90.1 (371)	9.9 (38)
Combat service support	85.9 (1957)	14.1 (295)
Work matched trade, experiences, ability		
Yes	86.0 (2491)	14.0 (376)
No, generally above my ability	76.7 (238)	23.3 (67)
No, generally below my ability	83.8 (202)	16.2 (35)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death		
Never	92.5 (507)	7.5 (38)
Once or twice	86.9 (802)	13.1 (114)
Sometimes	85.1 (806)	14.9 (127)
Many times	79.3 (819)	20.7 (204)
Time in a hostile area		
Not at all	88.5 (885)	11.5 (105)
Up to one week	86.3 (619)	13.7 (87)
One week to one month	83.8 (580)	16.2 (105)
More than a month	81.0 (812)	19.0 (183)
Combat exposure	17.6 (16.7 – 18.5)	25.3 (23.1 – 27.5)
Support for personal problems from unit		
Agree	86.4 (1711)	13.6 (245)
Neither	83.5 (690)	16.5 (132)
Disagree	81.9 (529)	18.1 (107)
Seniors were interested in what I did		
Agree	86.0 (2033)	14.0 (294)
Neither	83.5 (542)	16.5 (99)
Disagree	81.3 (360)	18.7 (90)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit		
Agree	86.9 (2118)	13.1 (291)
Neither	82.5 (489)	17.5 (94)
Disagree	77.1 (324)	22.9 (99)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed		
Disagree	86.6 (2639)	13.4 (380)
Agree	72.6 (269)	27.4 (97)
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away		
Yes, and it was enough	90.4 (927)	9.6 (98)
Yes, but it was not enough	80.8 (530)	19.2 (124)
No, no support was provided	77.6 (752)	22.4 (193)
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed		
Disagree	86.1 (2813)	13.9 (427)
Agree	59.6 (91)	40.4 (55)
Did you received a verbal homecoming		
No	83.7 (1316)	16.3 (233)
Yes	86.1 (1560)	13.9 (239)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; Percentages are weighted

MORs adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics

Adjusted ORs (adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, and deployed for more than 13 months in 3 years) show that experiencing relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment is associated with (table 62):

- Most recently deployed to Iraq
- Having a combat role
- Perceiving work to be above trade, experience or ability
- Believing to be in serious danger of injury or death
- Spending one week or more in a hostile area
- Combat exposure
- Not feeling informed about what was going on in your unit
- Not receiving enough personal support from family whilst deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Perceiving the military to have not provided enough or provided no support for your spouse
- Not receiving a verbal homecoming debrief

Table 62 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for the associations between deployment experiences and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Deployment experiences	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment
Last deployment location	
Iraq	
Afghanistan	0.74 (0.57 – 0.95)*
Total Number of deployments	
1	
2	0.94 (0.72 – 1.22)
3+	0.92 (0.64 – 1.32)
Combat Role	
Combat	1.49 (1.12 -1.97)**
Combat support	0.63 (0.40 – 1.01)
Combat service support	
Work matched trade, experiences, ability	
Yes	
No, generally above my ability	1.60 (1.10 – 2.32)*
No, generally below my ability	1.11 (0.67 – 1.84)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death	
Never	
Once or twice	1.76 (1.07 – 2.90)*
Sometimes	2.06 (1.26 – 3.36)**
Many times	2.81 (1.75 – 4.53)***
Time in a hostile area	
Not at all	
Up to one week	1.21 (0.82 – 1.48)
One week to one month	1.44 (0.99 – 2.07)
More than a month	1.50 (1.07 – 2.08)*
Combat exposure	1.01 (1.01 – 1.02)***
Support for personal problems from unit	
Agree	
Neither	1.12 (0.83 – 1.52)
Disagree	1.29 (0.95 – 1.77)
Seniors were interested in what I did	
Agree	
Neither	1.15 (0.84 – 1.58)
Disagree	1.09 (0.77 – 1.55)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit	
Agree	
Neither	1.37 (0.99 – 1.89)
Disagree	1.73 (1.24 – 2.42)***
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed	
Agree	
Disagree	2.25 (1.62 – 3.13)***
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away	
Yes, and it was enough	
Yes, but it was not enough	1.90 (1.32 – 2.73)***
No, no support was provided	2.45 (1.76 – 3.40)***
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed	
Disagree	
Agree	4.08 (2.60 – 6.41)***
Did you received a verbal homecoming	
No	
Yes	0.76 (0.59 – 0.98)*

NB: No is used as reference category; ORs are weighted; * p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, and deployed for more than 13 months in three years

Full adjusted model: Deployment-related experiences and relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

The deployment-related experiences significantly associated with relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment to either Iraq or Afghanistan were included in a multivariable logistic regression model.

Location of last deployment (Wald test: F (1, 2260) = 2.43, p = 0.1190), role (Wald test: F (2, 2259) = 2.74, p = 0.0648), feeling work matched your trade, experiences, and ability (Wald test: F (2, 2298) = 0.50, p = 0.6067), being in a hostile area (Wald test: F (3, 2305) = 0.17, p = 0.9160), feeling informed about what was going on in your unit (Wald test: F (2, 2328) = 1.10, p = 0.3329), and not receiving a verbal homecoming debrief (Wald test: F (1, 2330) = 2.95, p = 0.0861) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the final model. A total of 2386 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (12, 2374) = 9.23 df = 2385, p <0.0001) (table 63).

Table 63 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment

Deployment experiences	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment
Believe in serious danger of injury or death	
Never	
Once or twice	1.73 (1.00 – 2.97)*
Sometimes	1.73 (1.01 – 2.97)*
Many times	2.05 (1.15 – 3.65)**
Combat exposure	1.01 (1.00 – 1.02)*
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed	
Agree	
Disagree	1.53 (1.04 – 2.25)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away	
Yes, and it was enough	
Yes, but it was not enough	1.63 (1.11 – 2.38)**
No, no support was provided	2.20 (1.58 – 3.07)***
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed	
Disagree	
Agree	3.63 (2.07 – 6.34)***

NB: No is used as reference category; All analyses are weighted * p <0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, and deployed for more than 13 months in three years and for all variables in the table

In a final model adjusted ORs indicate that reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment are associated with:

- Believing on at least one occasion that you were in serious danger of injury or death
- Combat exposure
- Feeling your family did not provide enough support whilst you were deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide any support for your spouse whilst you were deployed

Global relationship functioning and specific deployment-related experiences

A new composite score including all four (relationship satisfaction, discussed divorce or separation, impact of military career on relationship and relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment) relationship outcomes was created for this sub-sample. The composite score ranges from zero to four. Due to the small numbers in the score three and score four categories, these two categories were combined (see method chapter 2, page 87 for more details).

Of the 3691 participants meeting the inclusion criteria for this study 3074 (83.3%) had a global relationship functioning score. A new multivariable multinomial regression model was built before investigating the association between global relationship functioning and deployment-related experiences.

Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning

Unadjusted MORs show that age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, service, rank, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years, are associated with global relationship functioning (table 64).

Table 64 Unadjusted Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics by global relationship functioning

Demographics	Global relationship functioning score		
	1	**2**	**3**
Socio-demographics			
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	0.96 (0.95 – 0.97)***	0.96 (0.94 – 0.97)***	0.97 (0.95 – 0.99)**
Gender			
Male			
Female	0.99 (0.68 – 1.44)	0.86 (0.51 – 1.45)	0.41 (0.18 – 0.93)*
Education			
No qualifications	1.14 (0.73 – 1.80)	1.49 (0.83 – 2.68)	1.55 (0.76 – 3.16)
GCSE's/A-Levels			
Degree or higher	1.35 (1.04 – 1.71)*	1.40 (0.99 – 1.97)‡	1.64 (1.06 -2.55)*
Childhood family relationship adversity			
0			
1	0.99 (0.75 – 1.28)	1.44 (1.00 – 2.07)*	1.24 (0.78 – 1.95)
2+	1.36 (1.09 – 1.71)**	1.87 (1.38 – 2.52)***	2.05 (1.42 – 2.96)***
Childhood antisocial behaviour			
No			
Yes	1.35 (1.04 – 1.74)*	2.40 (1.75 – 3.29)***	2.79 (1.94 – 4.01)***
Relationship type			
Married			
Co-habiting	1.58 (1.18 – 2.09)**	1.83 (1.26 – 2.67)**	1.29 (0.79 – 2.11)
Long term relationship	1.94 (1.49 – 2.53)***	2.29 (1.62 – 3.23)***	2.08 (1.37 – 3.16)***
Parental status			
No			
Yes	0.85 (0.70 – 1.03)	0.88 (0.67 – 1.15)	1.41 (1.01 – 1.96)*
Military characteristics			
Service			
Naval services	0.84 (0.60 – 1.18)	0.83 (0.51 – 1.32)	0.91 (0.55 – 1.52)
Army			
RAF	0.89 (0.70 – 1.13)	0.64 (0.45 – 0.89)**	0.64 (0.41 – 0.99)*
Rank			
Officer	0.78 (0.61 – 0.99)*	0.67 (0.47 – 0.93)*	0.69 (0.46 – 1.05)
NCO			
Other rank	1.06 (0.72 – 1.39)	1.41 (1.00 – 1.97)*	1.20 (0.78 – 1.84)
Engagement type			
Regular			
Reserve	0.56 (0.38 – 0.81)**	0.67 (0.39 – 1.14)	0.76 (0.42 – 1.39)
Time deployed in last 3 years			
Less than 13 months			
13 + months	1.69 (1.24 – 2.30)***	2.16 (1.46 – 3.18)***	2.26 (1.43 – 3.56)***
Serving Status			
Serving			
left	0.86 (0.62 – 1.20)	1.08 (0.70 – 1.67)	1.10 (0.66 – 1.38)

NB: Score of 0 is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted; * $p < 0.05$; ‡$p = 0.055$

Unadjusted variables significantly associated with global relationship functioning were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model. Gender (Wald: F(3, 2784) = 0.86, p = 0.4603), education (Wald: F(6, 2781) = 0.89, p = 0.0.5034), and service (Wald: F(6, 2865) = 0.52, p 0.7925) did not significantly contribute to the model and were not included in the full model. A total of 2871 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (33, 2838) = 4.50, df = 2870, p <0.000) (table 65).

Table 65 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning (deployed only sample)

Demographics	**Global relationship functioning score**		
	1	**2**	**3**
Socio-demographics			
Age at questionnaire completion (years)	0.96 (0.94 – 0.98)*	0.97 (0.95 – 1.00)	0.99 (0.98 – 1.02)
Childhood family relationship adversity			
0			
1	0.97 (0.74 – 1.28)	1.38 (0.94 – 2.00)	1.09 (0.67 – 1.77)
2+	1.37 (1.08 – 1.75)**	1.56 (1.13 – 2.14)**	1.56 (1.04 – 2.36)*
Childhood antisocial behaviour			
No			
Yes	1.14 (0.86 – 1.52)	1.95 (1.39 – 2.74)***	2.16 (1.43 – 3.25)***
Relationship type			
Married			
Co-habiting	1.41 (1.02 – 2.35)*	1.51 (0.97 – 2.35)	1.51 (0.84 – 2.70)
Long term relationship	1.69 (1.22 – 2.35)**	1.97 (1.25 – 3.11)**	2.42 (1.43 – 4.09)***
Parental status			
No			
Yes	1.05 (0.84 – 1.33)	1.06 (0.76 – 1.48)	1.68 (1.12 – 2.52)**
Military characteristics			
Rank			
Officer	1.04 (0.80 – 1.35)	0.97 (0.67 – 1.41)	1.07 (0.67 – 1.69)
NCO			
Other rank	0.69 (0.50 – 0.94)*	1.01 (0.67 – 1.50)	0.98 (0.59 – 1.63)
Engagement type			
Regular			
Reserve	0.59 (0.39 – 0.88)**	0.77 (0.44 – 1.37)	0.91 (0.50 – 1.66)
Time deployed in last 3 years			
Less than 13 months			
13 + months	1.46 (1.06 – 2.02)**	1.70 (1.12 – 2.58)**	1.88 (1.17 – 3.04)**

NB: 0 score was used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Adjusted MORs indicate that global relationship functioning is associated with being younger, childhood family relationship adversity, being in a co-habiting or long term relationship compared to being married, having children, being an NCO compared to being of other ranks, being a regular, and having deployed for more than 13 months in a three year period (table 65).

Distribution of deployment-related experiences by global relationship functioning

The distribution of deployment-related experiences by global relationship functioning is shown in table 66.

Table 66 Distribution of deployment-related experiences by global relationship functioning: total number and percentage presented (except for combat exposure where mean and 95% confidence intervals are presented)

Deployment experiences	Global relationship functioning score			
	0 % (n)	1 % (n)	2 % (n)	3 % (n)
Total	44.6 (1389)	32.6 (1014)	13.8 (413)	9.0 (258)
Last deployment location				
Iraq	44.9 (775)	31.4 (538)	14.6 (247)	9.1 (143)
Afghanistan	44.2 (614)	34.6 (476)	12.5 (166)	8.7 (115)
Total number of deployments				
1	44.9 (575)	31.6 (428)	14.4 (189)	9.1 (114)
2	45.5 (535)	32.8 (376)	13.4 (155)	8.3 (99)
3+	42.0 (279)	35.2 (210)	12.6 (69)	10.2 (45)
Combat Role				
Combat	38.2 (223)	31.7 (200)	19.3 (123)	10.8 (66)
Combat support	47.5 (169)	33.4 (133)	12.1 (49)	7.0 (25)
Combat service support	46.3 (975)	32.6 (668)	12.4 (238)	8.7 (161)
Work matched trade, experiences, ability				
Yes	46.7 (1218)	32.3 (840)	12.8 (320)	8.2 (200)
No, generally above my ability	28.8 (82)	33.5 (92)	22.1 (54)	15.6 (36)
No, generally below my ability	42.5 (83)	33.5 (74)	13.2 (27)	10.8 (20)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death				
Never	50.7 (253)	34.0 (161)	11.2 (55)	4.1 (23)
Once or twice	47.3 (391)	33.6 (286)	11.1 (91)	8.0 (64)
Sometimes	45.2 (388)	32.4 (280)	14.0 (117)	8.4 (63)
Many times	38.9 (351)	31.1 (283)	17.0 (142)	13.0 (107)
Time in a hostile area				
Not at all	51.0 (460)	30.0 (273)	11.8 (105)	7.2 (64)
Up to one week	46.7 (302)	30.6 (208)	12.8 (75)	9.9 (50)
One week to one month	41.9 (360)	37.5 (227)	13.1 (79)	7.5 (50)
More than a month	38.9 (344)	33.3 (290)	16.8 (143)	11.0 (90)
Combat exposure	16.2 (15.1 – 17.3)	18.4 (16.9 – 20.0)	21.1 (18.5 – 23.7)	25.8 (22.8 – 28.8)
Support for personal problems from unit				
Agree	47.7 (840)	32.2 (569)	12.7 (212)	7.4 (130)
Neither	41.8 (319)	34.2 (24)	15.0 (108)	9.0 (63)
Disagree	39.3 (222)	31.9 (195)	15.0 (88)	13.8 (64)
Seniors were interested in what I did				
Agree	47.9 (1018)	32.0 (677)	11.9 (242)	8.2 (159)
Neither	37.9 (221)	35.6 (214)	19.1 (100)	7.4 (38)
Disagree	37.9 (144)	31.3 (118)	14.6 (65)	16.2 (60)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit				
Agree	48.2 (1056)	31.9 (699)	12.1 (254)	7.8 (161)
Neither	40.8 (213)	34.5 (180)	14.1 (73)	10.6 (51)
Disagree	30.7 (115)	34.1 (129)	21.8 (80)	13.4 (45)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed				
Disagree	46.9 (1280)	32.8 (899)	13.2 (341)	7.1 (185)
Agree	28.4 (95)	30.8 (100)	16.7 (60)	24.1 (71)
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away				
Yes, and it was enough	55.4 (518)	28.1 (274)	12.0 (106)	4.5 (42)
Yes, but it was not enough	42.1 (2610	32.8 (201)	13.3 (81)	11.8 (73)
No, no support was provided	36.3 (33)	34.2 (302)	15.1 (140)	14.4 (113)
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed				
Disagree	45.3 (1337)	33.4 (977)	13.1 (372)	8.2 (229)
Agree	26.8 (30)	18.6 (25)	28.1 (33)	26.5 (27)
Did you received a verbal homecoming				
No	42.3 (625)	34.3 (491)	14.1 (193)	9.3 (126)
Yes	46.9 (734)	31.1 (496)	13.2 (204)	8.8 (127)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; Percentages are weighted

MORs adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics

Adjusted MORs (adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, engagement type, time deployed in the last three years and relationship type) indicate that global relationship functioning is associated with (table 67):

- Combat role
- Work being generally above trade, experience, or ability
- Believing to be in serious danger of injury or death
- Spending more than a month in a hostile area
- Combat exposure
- Feeling you could not go to others in the unit with personal problems
- Feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing
- Felt informed about what was happening in your unit
- Did not receive enough personal support from family whilst deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide enough or any support for your spouse whilst deployed
- Not receiving a verbal homecoming debrief

Table 67 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and global relationship functioning (adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics)

	Global relationship functioning score		
Deployment experiences	**1**	**2**	**3**
Last deployment location			
Iraq			
Afghanistan	1.08 (0.88 – 1.33)	0.84 (0.63 – 1.11)	0.97 (0.69 – 1.36)
Total number of deployments			
1			
2	0.94 (0.75 – 1.19)	0.86 (0.64 – 1.17)	0.87 (0.59 – 1.26)
3+	0.97 (0.95 – 0.99)*	0.81 (0.54 – 1.23)	1.05 (0.45 – 1.72)
Combat Role			
Combat	1.01 (0.76 – 1.34)	1.48 (1.06 – 2.06)*	1.32 (0.86 – 1.99)
Combat support	0.92 (0.67 – 1.26)	0.95 (0.61 – 1.50)	0.71 (0.40 – 1.26)
Combat service support			
Work matched trade, experiences, ability			
Yes			
No, generally above my ability	1.51 (1.02 – 2.24)*	2.28 (1.44 – 3.31)*	2.51 (1.48 – 4.25)*
No, generally below my ability	1.15 (0.76 – 1.76)	1.11 (0.64 – 1.92)	1.31 (0.65 – 2.62)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death			
Never			
Once or twice	0.98 (0.72 – 1.35)	0.90 (0.56 – 1.45)	1.86 (1.01 – 3.43)*
Sometimes	1.10 (0.80 – 1.52)	1.39 (0.89 – 2.15)	2.10 (1.15 – 3.87)*
Many times			
Time in a hostile area			
Not at all			
Up to one week	1.20 (0.89 – 1.61)	1.28 (0.85 – 1.93)	1.50 (0.91 – 2.45)
One week to one month	1.54 (1.14 – 2.07)**	1.24 (0.81 – 1.89)	1.29 (0.79 – 2.11)
More than a month	1.33 (1.00- 1.75)*	1.41 (0.98 – 2.04)	1.49 (0.94 – 2.85)
Combat exposure	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)***
Support for personal problems from unit			
Agree			
Neither	1.12 (0.96 – 1.58)	1.39 (0.99 – 1.95)	1.16 (0.75 – 1.78)
Disagree	1.32 (0.99 -1.75)	1.66 (1.14 – 2.410**	2.27 (1.49 – 3.45)***
Seniors were interested in what I did			
Agree			
Neither	1.30 (0.99 – 1.71)	1.86 (1.32 – 2.62)***	1.04 (0.64 – 1.68)
Disagree	1.11 (0.79 – 1.54)	1.31 (0.88 – 1.96)	1.96 (1.25 – 3.09)**
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit			
Agree			
Neither	1.23 (0.92 – 1.63)	1.34 (0.92 – 1.95)	1.46 (0.93 – 2.28)
Disagree	1.62 (1.15 – 2.270**	2.51 (1.69 – 3.74)***	2.3 (1.43 – 3.94)***
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed			
Disagree			
Agree	1.68 (1.16 – 2.42)**	2.08 (1.33 – 3.25)***	5.34 (3.45 – 8.25)***
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away			
Yes, and it was enough			
Yes, but it was not enough	1.47 (1.09 – 1.99)**	1.44 (0.96 – 2.16)	3.05 (1.81 – 5.16)***
No, no support was provided	1.82 (1.39 – 2.40)***	1.86 (1.29 – 2.69)***	4.35 (2.69 – 7.05)***
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed			
Disagree			
Agree	1.00 (0.50 – 2.00)	3.35 (1.74 – 6.46)***	5.49 (2.68 – 11.25)***
Did you received a verbal homecoming			
No			
Yes	0.70 (0.56 – 0.87)***	0.67 (0.50 – 0.89)**	0.71 (0.50 – 1.02)

NB: Score of 0 is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; **p <0.01; ***p < 0.001† adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years

Full adjusted model: Deployment-related experiences and relationship satisfaction

The deployment experiences significantly associated with global relationship functioning were included in a multivariable multinomial regression model adjusting for the previously identified socio-demographic and military characteristics. Combat role (Wald test: F (6, 2120) = 0.93, p = 0.4738), combat exposure (Wald test: F (3, 2159) = 1.25, p = 0.2898), not feeling you could go to others in your unit for support with personal problems (Wald test: F (6, 2162) = 1.31, p = 0.2483), and feeling seniors were not interested in what you were doing (Wald test: F (6, 2163) = 1.47, p = 0.1837), did not significantly contribute to the model and are not included in the final model. A total of 2170 cases were analysed; the full model is significantly reliable (F (78, 2092) = 3.52, df = 2169, p <0.0001) (table 68).

Table 68 Full Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and global relationship functioning

	Global relationship functioning score		
Deployment experiences	**1**	**2**	**3**
Work matched trade, experiences, ability			
Yes			
No, generally above my ability	1.40 (0.86 – 2.27)	2.09 (1.22 – 3.61)**	1.99 (1.08 – 3.69)*
No, generally below my ability	0.91 (0.54 – 1.55)	0.70 (0.35 – 1.41)	0.93 (0.39 – 2.25)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death			
Never			
Once or twice	0.91 (0.61 – 1.35)	0.82 (0.44 – 1.53)	1.66 (0.80 – 3.43)
Sometimes	1.50 (0.77 – 1.71)	1.29 (0.72 – 2.34)	2.02 (0.98 – 4.19)
Many times	1.13 (0.73 – 1.74)	1.60 (0.88 – 2.87)	3.00 (1.46 – 6.16)**
Time in a hostile area			
Not at all			
Up to one week	1.14 (0.80 – 1.62)	1.19 (0.71 – 1.99)	1.28 (0.73 – 2.25)
One week to one month	1.80 (1.25 –2.57)***	1.35 (0.79 – 2.28)	1.15 (0.64 – 2.05)
More than a month	1.42 (0.98 – 2.05)	1.21 (0.75 – 1.98)	1.36 (0.77 – 2.38)
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit			
Agree			
Neither	1.15 (0.83 – 1.61)	1.18 (0.75 – 1.86)	1.25 (0.76 – 2.07)
Disagree	1.23 (0.81 – 1.87)	1.66 (1.01 – 2.72)*	1.34 (0.76 – 2.38)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed			
Disagree			
Agree	1.32 (0.87 – 1.61)	1.27 (0.75 – 2.15)	3.44 (2.07 – 5.71)***
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away			
Yes, and it was enough			
Yes, but it was not enough	1.49 (1.09 – 2.03)**	1.32 (0.87 – 2.00)	2.33 (1.32 – 4.10)**
No, no support was provided	1.78 (1.32 – 2.39)***	1.47 (0.98 – 2.21)	3.11 (1.93 – 5.03)***
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed			
Disagree			
Agree	0.97 (0.44 – 2.16)	3.79 (1.71 – 8.41)***	4.68 (1.96 – 11.13)***
Did you received a verbal homecoming			
No			
Yes	0.74 (0.57 – 0.96)*	0.76 (0.53 – 1.08)	0.75 (0.49 – 1.15)

NB: 0 score is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001; † adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, time deployed in the last three years, and all variables in the model

In a final model of global relationship functioning and deployment experiences, adjusted MORs indicate that scoring one is associated with spending one week to one month in a hostile area, believing the military did not provide enough or did not provide any support for their spouse whilst deployed, and not receiving a verbal

homecoming debrief. A global relationship functioning score of two is associated with reporting work to be above trade, ability or experience, not feeling informed about what was happening in your unit, and financial problems at home whilst deployed. A score of three is associated with reporting work to be above trade, ability or experience, believing to be in serious danger of injury or death, not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed, experiencing financial problems at home whilst deployed, and believing that the military did not provide enough or any support for your spouse whilst deployed.

Chapter Summary

This results chapter investigated whether there were any deployment-related experiences associated with any of the five relationship outcome measures. The prevalence of relationship difficulties across the five outcomes continues to be minimal, as in results chapter 4, even when looking at those military personnel who have deployed. This provides further evidence that the majority of UK military personnel have romantic relationships resilient to the additional strains of military life.

Re-examination of the socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with each outcome indicates, similarly to the results found in chapter 4 (page 151), that childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, being in a long term relationship compared to being married, having children, and deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period are key socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with potential relationship difficulties.

Investigation of the deployment-related experiences associated with the five relationship outcome measures indicates that not receiving enough support from your family whilst deployed is the factor consistently associated with all five relationship outcome measures and therefore most likely to increase the likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties (table 69). Experiencing financial problems at home whilst deployed and believing the military did not provide any support to ones' spouse are both associated with four of the five relationship outcomes indicating that these are also key factors associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties. Reporting work to generally be above trade, experience and ability is consistently associated with three of the five relationship outcomes indicating that this is a further key factor associated with relationship difficulties.

Combat exposure is only associated with discussing divorce or separation and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment. The ORs for these associations are small and almost borderline significant, indicating a small effect size of combat exposure on these two relationship outcomes. These results provide partial support for the hypothesis that combat exposure and/or combat role will be associated with relationship difficulties. Although combat exposure is associated, the strength of this association is weak compared to other factors that seem to indicate a greater likelihood of relationship difficulties in comparison (e.g. not enough family support, financial problems, not enough support from military for spouse, and work being above trade, experiences and ability).

The inconsistencies across the associations between deployment-related experiences and the relationship outcomes were expected as the relationship outcomes each

measure a different dimension of potential relationship difficulties. Despite the inconsistencies, this analysis indicates that there are key factors associated with experiencing relationship difficulties for deploying UK military personnel. These include not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed, experiencing financial problems at home whilst deployed, and believing the military did not provide enough support to spouse or partner whilst deployed. Reporting work to generally be above trade, experience and ability is the main work related factor associated with relationship difficulties. A summary of all associated socio-demographic, military characteristics and deployment-related experiences is provided in table 69.

Table 69 Summary of relationship outcomes and associations with socio-demographics, military characteristics, and deployment-related experiences

	Relationship dissatisfaction	Discussed Divorce or Separation	Negative Impact of Military Career on Relationship	Relationship or family problems post-deployment	Global Relationship Functioning (Score3: most at risk)
Socio-demographics					
Age	-	-	Younger	-	-
Gender	-	-		-	-
Education	-	-	GCSE's/A-levels	-	-
Childhood family relationship adversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Childhood antisocial behaviour	-	✓	-	✓	✓
Relationship type	Long term	Co-habiting/ long term	Long term	-	Long term
Parental status	Children	Children	-	-	Children
Military Characteristics					
Engagement type	Reserve	-	Regular	-	-
Time deployed in last three years	-	-	13 months+	13 months+	13 months+
Serving status					
Deployment experiences					
Time spent in a hostile area	-	-	One week or more	-	-
Work above trade, experiences and ability	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Believed to be in serious danger of injury or death	-	-	-	Once or more	Sometime or more
Combat exposure	-	✓	-	✓	-
Did not feel could go to anyone in unit for personal problems	✓	-	-	-	-
Did not feel informed about what was happening in unit	-	-	✓	-	-
Not enough support from family	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial problems at home whilst deployed	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Military did not provide support for spouse whilst away	-	✓	✓	✓	✓

CHAPTER 6: EXPLORATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS, ALCOHOL MISUSE, AND THE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS OF UK MILITARY PERSONNEL

Results from my thesis so far indicate that childhood family relationship adversity or childhood antisocial behaviour, being in a long term relationship (compared to being married), and not feeling supported by family whilst deployed are the key factors consistently associated with all relationship outcomes considered.

So far in my thesis mental health and alcohol misuse have not been investigated. Findings from US research, as discussed in the introduction (chapter 1, page 42), indicates that mental health symptoms, mainly Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mediate the association between combat exposure and relationship difficulties. In this results chapter the hypothesis that symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), probable PTSD, and/or alcohol misuse mediate the association between combat exposure and relationship outcomes is tested. The possibility of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse mediating associations between the relationship outcomes and the other variables (socio-demographic, military characteristics, and deployment-related experiences) found to be associated (chapters 4 and 5) are also examined.

Investigation of mediation effects are conducted for each relationship outcome in turn. Only military personnel in a relationship are included in these analyses. To

assess for mediating effects, symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse, are independently added to each existing regression model, for each relationship outcome, identified in chapters 4 and 5. A possible mediation effect is indicated if: 1) the addition of the potential mediating variable (CMD, PTSD, or alcohol misuse) to the regression model changes associations with of any of the independent variables (IV; socio-demographic, military characteristic, or deployment-related experience) from significant to non-significant (with a minimum change in Odds Ratio (OR) or Multinomial Odds Ratio (MOR) of +/- 0.2), and 2) if the IV with changed significance and the mediating variable are significantly associated (chapter 2, page 101 for detail of the mediation method).

Initially, the distribution of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse in the entire sample by relationship status is presented. This is followed by an examination of the distribution of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse across each of the relationship outcomes. The results of the mediation investigation for each relationship outcome are then presented in turn.

Distribution of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse distribution by relationship status

In the entire sample (n= 9984), 19.7% reported symptoms of CMD, 4.0% probable PTSD, and 13.0% alcohol misuse. Chi-squared analyses indicated that not being in a

relationship was associated with all symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse (table 70). For the remainder of this chapter the focus is on those in a relationship (n=7581) (sample for relationship or family problems as a result of deployment includes only those in a relationship and have deployed, n=3691).

Table 70 Distribution of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse in the entire sample by relationship status

	CMD Yes (%) n = 9805	PTSD Yes (%) n = 9831	Alcohol misuse Yes (%) n = 9790
Total	19.7	4.0	13.0
Not in a relationship	25.2***	5.3**	21.8***
In a relationship	18.2	3.6	10.6

NB: Percentages are weighted; * p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p <0.001 from chi-square analysis

Symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse distribution

Examination of the distribution of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse across each relationship outcome indicates that military personnel who report being dissatisfied with their relationship, having discussed divorce or separation in the last year, report their military career to have had a negative impact on their relationship, report relationship or family problems as a result of deployment, and have a global relationship functioning score of one or more, are more likely to report symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse (table 71).

Table 71 Distribution of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse by each relationship outcome

Relationship Outcome	CMD Yes (%)	PTSD Yes (%)	Alcohol misuse Yes (%)
Total	18.2	3.6	10.6
Relationship satisfaction*(n=7467)**			
Satisfied	14.8	2.6	9.2
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	35.1	10.6	17.7
Dissatisfied	48.1	9.8	21.8
Discussed divorce or separation* (n=7124)**			
No	14.9	2.4	8.7
Yes	33.9	9.6	19.0
Impact of military career on relationship*(n=7199)**			
Positive impact	11.3	1.3	5.8
No impact	13.7	2.6	8.8
Negative impact	26.1	5.9	15.1
Global relationship functioning score* (n=6861)**			
0	10.7	1.3	6.4
1	21.4	4.5	12.5
2	33.3	8.1	17.5
3	52.4	13.6	27.6
Relationship or family problems as a result of deployment* (n=3439(deployed only))**			
No	13.6	2.3	10.8
Yes	42.4	12.3	28.6

NB: Percentages are weighted: * p <0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 from chi-square analysis

Mediation Analysis

Potential mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse: relationship satisfaction

The addition of the mediating variables (symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse), to the existing multivariable multinomial regression models for relationship satisfaction (socio-demographic and military characteristics, chapter 4, page 119; deployment-related experiences, chapter 5, page 165) indicate the possibility of one mediation effect. The inclusion of symptoms of CMD changed the association between relationship dissatisfaction and feeling you could not go to others

in your unit with a personal problem (table 72) indicating that symptoms of CMD mediate the association between feeling you could not go to others in your unit with personal problems and relationship dissatisfaction; the association between symptoms of CMD and feeling you could not go to others in your unit with a personal problem was significant (OR 2.29 (1.77 – 2.95 CI). There was no evidence for probable PTSD or alcohol misuse mediating any associations (appendix 3, tables 82 and 83, pages 404 - 406).

Table 72 Adjusted† Multinomial Odds Ratios (MORs) for associations between support for personal problems from unit and relationship dissatisfaction with and without the inclusion of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD)

Support for personal problems from unit	Relationship dissatisfaction	
	Original model	With symptoms CMD
Agree		
Neither	0.91 (0.57 – 1.48)	0.73 (0.44 – 1.22)
Disagree	1.88 (1.21 – 2.91)**	1.46 (0.93 – 2.28)

NB: MORS are weighted; Satisfied is used as reference category; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, parental status, engagement type, serving status support for personal problems from unit, did not receive enough support from family whilst deployed, and did not receive a verbal homecoming debrief;** p <0.01

Potential mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse: relationship stability

The inclusion of the mediating variables to the existing multivariable logistic regression models for relationship stability and socio-demographic and military characteristics (chapter 4, page 125) and deployment-related experiences (chapter 5, page 169), did not change any of the existing associations thus they do not mediate associations between any of the associated variables and discussed divorce or separation in the last year (appendix 4, tables 84 and 85, page 407- 409).

Potential mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD and alcohol misuse: impact of military career on relationship

The addition of the mediating variables to the existing model for impact of military career on relationship (socio-demographic and military characteristics, chapter 4, page 130; deployment-related experiences, chapter 5, page 179), indicates the possibility of one mediation effect. The inclusion of symptoms of CMD removed the association with not feeling informed about what was happening in your unit (table 73). Investigation shows that the association between symptoms of CMD and not feeling informed about what was happening in your unit was significant (OR 2.83 (1.77 – 2.95 CI). This indicates that symptoms of CMD mediate the association between not feeling informed about what is happening in your unit and reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship. The addition of probable PTSD and alcohol misuse to the existing models did not change any associations indicating no mediation effects (appendix 5, tables 86 and 87, pages 410 - 412).

Table 73 Adjusted† MORs for associations between not feeling informed about what was happening in your unit and negative impact of military career on relationship with and without the inclusion of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD)

Felt informed about what was happening in my unit	Negative impact of military career on relationship	
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD
Agree		
Neither	0.99 (0.71 – 1.37)	1.02 (0.73 – 1.42)
Disagree	1.74 (1.18 – 2.56)*	1.34 (0.89 – 2.01)

NB: MORS are weighted; No impact is used as reference category; † adjusted for age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, deploying for more than 13 months in the last 3 years, work match trade, experiences, and ability, time in a hostile area, did not receive enough support from family, military did not provide enough support for my spouse during deployment, and financial problems; * p <0.05

Potential mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse: global relationship functioning

The addition of probable PTSD to the existing regression model for global relationship functioning (socio-demographic and military characteristics, chapter 4, page 135; deployment-related experiences, chapter 5, page 198) did not alter any of the existing associations showing probable PTSD does not mediate any of the associations (appendix 6, table 88 and 89, pages 413 - 418).

The inclusion of symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse altered the associations between global relationship functioning and childhood antisocial behaviour and reporting work to be above trade, ability, and experience (table 74). Associations between symptoms of CMD and childhood antisocial behaviour (OR 1.82 (1.53 – 2.16 CI) and work matching trade, experience, and ability (OR 2.44 (1.79 – 3.34 CI) are significant, as are associations between alcohol misuse and childhood antisocial behaviour (OR 2.66 (2.08 – 3.41 CI) and work matching trade, experience, and ability (OR 2.16 (1.53 – 3.05 CI). This suggests that symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse mediate the associations between global relationship functioning scores of 3 and childhood antisocial behaviour and work being above trade, experience and ability.

Table 74 Adjusted† MORs for associations between childhood antisocial behaviour and work reported to be above trade, ability and experience, and global relationship functioning with and without the inclusion of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD) and alcohol misuse

	Global relationship functioning score		
Childhood antisocial behaviour	**1**	**2**	**3**
Original model	1.22 (1.00 – 1.49)	1.52 (1.17 – 1.97)**	1.60 (1.06 – 2.41)*
With symptoms of CMD	1.18 (0.97 – 1.44)	1.42 (1.09 – 1.85)**	1.37 (0.89 – 2.10)
With alcohol misuse	1.14 (0.94 – 1.39)	1.39 (1.07 – 1.82)**	1.32 (0.87 – 2.02)
Work reported to be above trade, ability and experience			
Original model	1.40 (0.86 – 2.27)	2.09 (1.22 – 3.61)**	1.99 (1.08 – 3.69)*
With symptoms of CMD	1.37 (0.85 – 2.23)	2.09 (1.21 – 3.61)*	1.57 (0.86 – 3.05)
With alcohol misuse	1.31 (0.81 – 2.10)	1.90 (1.09 – 3.30)*	1.62 (0.89 – 2.95)

NB: MORS are weighted; 0 is used as reference category; † childhood antisocial behaviour model adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, deployment status, deployed more than 13 months in three year, and serving status; work being above trade, ability and experience model additionally adjusted for work match trade, ability and experience, believe to be in serious danger of injury or death, time in a hostile area, felt informed about what was happening in your unit, did not receive enough support from family whilst deployed, military did not provide enough support to spouse whilst deployed, financial problems, and receiving a verbal homecoming debrief; * p <0.05, ** p < 0.01

Potential mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse: relationship or family problems as a result of deployment

The addition of probable PTSD and alcohol misuse to the existing regression model for relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment and socio-demographic and military characteristics (chapter 5, page 183) did not change any associations indicating no mediating effect. The addition of symptoms of CMD to the existing model changed the associations with time deployed in the last three years, however, the change was minimal and the mediation effect interpreted conservatively (appendix 7, table 90 pages 419 - 420).

The inclusion of the mediating variables to the existing regression model for relationship or family problems as a result of deployment and deployed-related experiences (chapter 5, page 189) changed the association with combat exposure. These changes were, however, interpreted conservatively as the association had

previously been borderline and the changes were minimal. The addition of symptoms of CMD also changed the association with not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed, however, this was also a minimal change and interpreted conservatively (appendix 7, table 91, page 421).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents distributions of the prevalence of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse and indicates that mental health and alcohol problems for UK military personnel are lower among those in a relationship.

Reporting symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse are consistently associated with relationship dissatisfaction, discussing divorce or separation in the last year, reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship, reporting relationship or family problems as a result of deployment, and global relationship functioning. The causal direction of these associations is not known but this indicates that symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse are potential risk factors for relationship difficulties. However, this could be a bi-directional effect; it is possible that having relationship difficulties could also increase the likelihood of experiencing mental health problems or alcohol misuse.

Based on the results of the mediation analysis, the hypothesis for this results chapter is rejected; the addition of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse to the regression models for relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, impact of military career on relationship and global relationship functioning did not mediate the associations with combat exposure. There was a small change in association with

combat exposure and relationship or family problems as a result of deployment, however, this was minimal and interpreted conservatively.

Mediation analysis with each relationship outcome shows the following potential mediation effects (figure 7):

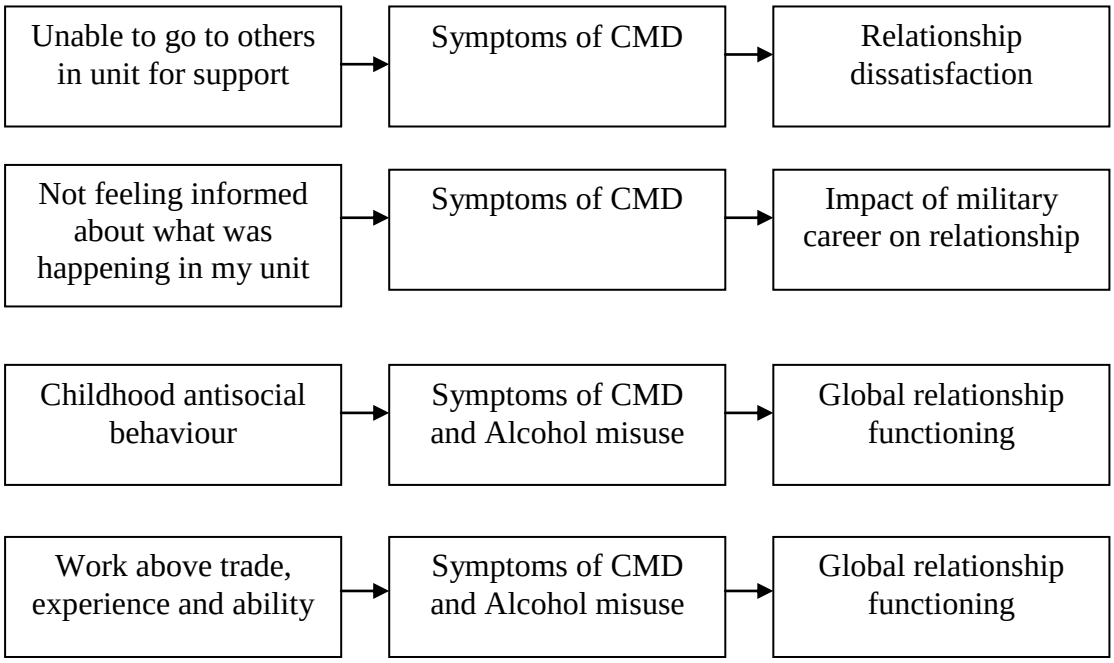

Figure 7 Mental health and alcohol misuse mediations between relationship outcomes and specific explanatory variables

CHAPTER 7: QUANTITATIVE STUDIES KEY FINDINGS

The overall objective of this thesis is to gain a detailed understanding of how military life generally, and deployment specifically, may impact on the romantic relationships of UK military personnel in the context of the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Four quantitative studies (chapters 3-6) address this objective: 1) the distribution of marital status in the UK military is examined and compared with the general population (chapter 3); 2) the prevalence of potential relationship difficulties and the associated socio-demographic and military characteristics are investigated (chapter 4); 3) a subsample of deployed only personnel are examined to see if any deployment-related experiences are associated with relationship difficulties (chapter 5); and 4) the possibility of symptoms of common mental disorders (CMD), probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse mediating the associations between socio-demographic, military characteristics, and deployment-related experiences and relationship difficulties are explored (chapter 6). A summary of the key findings are presented, these will be discussed in chapter 8.

Marital status among the military: Comparison with the general population and associated socio-demographic and military characteristics

Hypothesis:

- Compared to the general population UK military personnel will marry younger

This hypothesis was shown to be supported (chapter 3).

Additional relevant findings:

Marital status comparisons with the general population:

- The majority (78.5%) of the UK military are in a relationship (71.8% married, 14.5% co-habiting, and 13.7% long term relationship)
- Military personnel under 30 year olds are more likely to be divorced compared to age matched general population

Marital status distribution and associated factors:

- Women in the military are more likely to be single, and divorced, separated, or widowed than men who are more likely to be in a relationship
- Childhood family relationship adversity is associated with being divorced, separated, or widowed
- Being in the Army and being a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) are associated with being divorced, separated or widowed
- Reserves are more likely to be single compared to regular personnel

Socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship difficulties among the UK military

Hypotheses:

- Childhood adversity will be associated with relationship difficulties
- Deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period will be associated with relationship difficulties

Both hypotheses are accepted based on the results shown in chapter 4.

Additional key findings: socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship difficulties

Socio-demographic

- Being in a long term unmarried, non-cohabiting relationship
- Childhood family relationship adversity
- Childhood antisocial behaviour
- Having children (particular risk for married relationships)

Military characteristics

- Being a regular (particular risk for unmarried relationships)
- Still serving
- Deployment

Deployment-related experiences associated with relationship difficulties

Hypothesis:

- Combat exposure or having a combat role will be associated with relationship difficulties

Hypothesis partially accepted: Combat exposure is associated with discussing divorce or separation and with relationship or family problems as a result of deployment but with a small effect size.

Additional relevant findings - Key deployment-related experiences associated with relationship difficulties

- Feeling that your family did not provide enough support whilst you were deployed
- Financial problems at home whilst deployed
- Believing the military did not provide enough support for your spouse/partner whilst deployed
- Reporting work to generally be above trade, experience and ability

Exploration of mental health symptoms, alcohol misuse, and the romantic relationships of UK military personnel

Hypothesis:

- If associations between combat exposure or combat role and relationship difficulties exist, the existence of mental health symptoms will mediate these

associations, so that combat exposure is only associated with relationship difficulties indirectly through mental health symptoms

This hypothesis is rejected: Symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse do not mediate the association between combat exposure or combat role and relationship difficulties.

Additional relevant findings:

Prevalence of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse:

Prevalence of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse are lower in UK military personnel who are in a relationship.

Mediation effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse:

Symptoms of PTSD do not mediate any of the associations and none of the associations with discussing divorce or separation are mediated by any of the mental health symptoms. Some mediation effects were found for:

Relationship satisfaction:

- Symptoms of CMD mediate the association between feeling you could not go to others in your unit for support with personal problems

Impact of military career on relationship:

- Symptoms of CMD mediate the association between not feeling informed about what was happening in your unit

Global relationship functioning:

- Symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse mediate the association between childhood antisocial behaviour and reporting work to generally be above trade, experiences and ability

Key factors associated with relationship difficulties among UK military personnel

There are clearly certain factors associated with relationship difficulties among UK military personnel (Table 75). These results are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Table 75 Key factors associated with relationship difficulties among UK military personnel

	Single	Divorced, separated, or widowed	Relationship dissatisfaction	Discussed Divorce or Separation	Negative Impact of Military Career on Relationship	Global Relationship Functioning	Relationship or family problems post-deployment
Socio-demographic factors							
Childhood family relationship adversity	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relationship type	-	-	Long term	Co-habiting/ long term	Long term	Long term	-
Gender	Female	Female	-	-	-	-	-
Parental status	-	-	Children	Children	-	Children	-
Military Characteristics							
Time deployed in the last three years	-	-	-	-	13 months+	13 months+	13 months+
Service	-	Army	-	Army	-	-	-
Rank	-	NCO	-	NCO	-	-	-
Engagement type	Reserve	-	Reserve	-	Regular	-	-
Deployment	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
Serving status					✓	✓	
Deployment experiences							
Not enough support from family	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial problems at home whilst deployed	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Military did not provide support for spouse whilst deployed	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work above trade, experiences and ability	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Believed to be in serious danger of injury or death	-	-	-	-	-	Sometime or more	Once or more
Combat exposure	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Mental health symptoms and alcohol misuse							
Symptoms of CMD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Probable PTSD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alcohol misuse	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

CHAPTER 8: QUANTITATIVE DISCUSSION

There is a "common sense" presumption that the marriages and romantic relationships of military personnel will be negatively affected by military service (Burland & Lundquist, 2013). To date, two papers investigating the romantic relationships of UK military personnel have been published. One investigating relationship stability in the context of deployments to Iraq (Rowe, Murphy, Wessely, & Fear, 2012) and the other, the impact of deployment on the spouses of military personnel (Dandeker, Eversden, Birtles, & Wessely, 2013). There are currently no studies, to my knowledge, that have investigated relationship difficulties from the perspective of serving military personnel, investigating military life broadly, rather than just the impact of deployment.

The objective of this thesis is to gain a detailed understanding of how military life generally, and deployment specifically, may impact on the romantic relationships of UK military personnel in the context of the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In order to examine this thoroughly, quantitative and qualitative methods have been employed. The quantitative section of my thesis examines the romantic relationships of the UK military across four aims (chapters 3 - 6): 1) a comparison of UK military and general population marital status distribution, and examination of marital status by socio-demographic and military characteristics, 2) investigation of the prevalence of relationship difficulties and associations with socio-

demographic and military characteristics, 3) analysis of deployment-related experiences associated with relationship difficulties among UK military personnel deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan, and 4) exploration of the potential mediating impact of symptoms of Common Mental Disorders (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse, on associations between relationship difficulties and the factors identified in aims 2 and 3 as being associated.

The key result from this thesis is that the majority of UK military personnel report perceiving their relationships to be resilient to the additional strains of military life. For those that do report difficulties, key factors associated with relationship difficulties have been identified. This chapter initially discusses the comparison of UK military and general population marital status distribution, then the prevalence of perceived relationship difficulties, before presenting the key factors associated with relationship difficulties in terms of socio-demographic, military characteristics, deployment-related experiences, and mental health symptoms and alcohol misuse. A review of the strengths and limitations of the quantitative studies is presented followed by a conclusion for this quantitative section.

Comparison of the UK military and the general population marital status distribution

This thesis provides the first comparison of military and general population marital status distribution for the UK. It indicates that the military are more

likely to be married, marry younger and less likely to be single (never married) compared to the general population. In the under 30 year age group the military are three times as likely as the general population to be divorced or widowed. Military personnel over 30 years old are, however, less likely to be divorced or widowed. These results are consistent with existing literature from the US (Cadigan, 2000; Adler-Baeder, et al., 2006; Karney, Loughran, & Pollard, 2012).

Research from the US proposes that the job and financial security provided by a military career may be one reason for the higher prevalence and earlier age of marriage in the military (Kelty & Segal, 2013). This is consistent with literature from the general population. Smock, Manning, and Porter (2005) conducted semi-structured interviews with 115 individuals who were co-habiting with the aim of investigating how economics shape marital decision making. They found that having financial and job security before embarking on marriage is perceived as being important in decisions to marry. The military offers young junior enlisted personnel higher pay rates and better benefits than other jobs available to age matched non-serving individuals (Kelty & Segal, 2013). Financial and job security are, therefore, possible factors associated with the increased prevalence of marriage, especially at a younger age, in the military.

Being married in the military offers additional benefits which may be attributable to the earlier age of marriage in the UK military. Married UK military personnel benefit from entitlement to Service Family

Accommodation (SFA) which is subsidised housing normally on or near the military base ("Defence Infrastructure Organisation: Service Family Accommodation (SFA)," 2013). Living in SFA enables easy access to the formal support offered by the military welfare services and informal community support and activities with other military spouses and families. Subsidised boarding school places are also available with the Continued Education Allowance (CEA) for children of personnel who live with their married partners in SFA (Harvey, 2011). In the event that a serving military member dies, the married spouse is entitled to the war widower pension, unmarried partners are not entitled to this compensation ("War Widow(er) Pension," 2013). Hogan and Seifert (2010) conducted research in the US investigating if the benefits afforded married military personnel encourages early marriage and found evidence to suggest that they do encourage individuals to marry earlier than they otherwise might.

Although the results of this thesis indicate that UK military personnel marry younger, they also indicate that UK military personnel under the age of 30 years have an increased prevalence of being divorced or widowed compared to the general population. Marriage at a younger age is associated with later marital instability and discord (McCone & O'Donnell, 2006; Wilson & Stuchbury, 2010; Karney & Crown, 2011; Burland & Lundquist, 2013). Once over 30 years old, however, the prevalence of divorce decreases in the military population to lower than that in the general population. It is possible that consistent with previous research, those who marry when older have a

lower risk of marital dissolution, indicating young age as a factor associated with marital instability (Karney & Crown, 2011).

The lower rates of divorce in 30 to 64 year olds, compared to the age matched general population, may also be attributable to the additional benefits available to married personnel. Dandeker, Eversden, Birtles, and Wessely (2013) conducted interviews with wives of UK Army personnel during a 6 month deployment. They found that many of the wives reported "perks" that helped moderate the impact of military life. These perks included tax breaks, quality of living, subsidised schooling, and improved social status when their husbands were promoted up the chain of command. They also found that job stability, financial security, and a good pension at the end of service enhanced their quality of life.

Ayles (2004) investigated the biographic factors associated with marriage quality in the UK general population. Ayles (2004) showed that poor economic situations may create additional pressure on relationships leading to marital disturbance. It may be the case that military life and the benefits afforded to married military couples not only induce decisions to marry but work as a protective factor to maintain quality and stability by providing a stable economic situation. Similar or lower rates of divorce in the military compared to the general population are reported in the US (Karney, et al., 2012; Burland & Lundquist, 2013). US literature supports the idea that the support, benefits and compensations provided by the military, for married

personnel, increase stability in marital relationships (Karney & Crown, 2011; Karney, et al., 2012; Burland & Lundquist, 2013).

Karney and Crown (2007) proposed the use of social exchange theory to understand the maintenance and dissolution of marriages in the military context. Social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) stipulates that decisions to start, continue and end relationships are based on the couple involved weighing up the perceived rewards and costs. Relationships are formed when both partners perceive the possible outcomes to be better than any alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Karney and Crown (2007) suggest social exchange theory can help understand military marriages in terms of a cost/benefits process where potential hardships are compensated for by benefits that strengthen and stabilise the relationship.

Burland and Lundquist (2013) report that, there is a premium for US soldiers from disadvantaged backgrounds who in the civilian world would have been more vulnerable to marital dissolution without the financial and support benefits received as part of their military career. Based on social exchange theory, continuation of a relationship may be motivated by the material and supportive gains rather than satisfaction and happiness with the relationship. If the alternative is to divorce and loose SFA, risk financial insecurity, and no longer have access to a supportive community environment, remaining in an unhappy relationship may be preferable.

Burland and Lundquist (2013) propose that of particular concern for military personnel's spouses is a lack of independent capital and work experience. In an environment where the majority of military members are male with female spouses and the nature of work involves frequent relocations and being responsible for raising children, it is quite possible that non-military spouses may not have had the opportunity to follow career aspirations or gain work experience. These military spouses may have limited human capital and job experience which might have otherwise protected them in the case of divorce. As a result they may feel trapped in their relationships as they are overly dependent on their marriage and the military for their well-being. It is possible that looking at divorce alone is misleading. A marriage that appears stable by the lack of separation or divorce is not necessarily of good quality and happy (Karney & Crown, 2007).

In the under 30's age group, co-habiting rates do not differ substantially between the military or general population, whereas in the older age groups co-habiting prevalence is much lower. Wilson and Stuchbury (2010) report that marital partnerships are more stable than co-habiting partnerships, thus, the lower co-habiting rates in the older age groups of the military population may be due to the relative instability. Military co-habiting couples may be more likely to terminate their relationships as they do not have access to the benefits which may enhance and strengthen relationships in the context of military life. Alternatively, based on the benefits afforded married couples, under 30 year old military co-habiting couples may be more likely to progress their relationship to marriage, compared to those in the general

population. It is, however, important to consider an alternate view when discussing the relative instability of married versus co-habiting relationships; as Wilson and Stuchbury (2010) point out it is possible that those who are more likely to have stable relationships may be the people who are more likely to marry.

Prevalence of relationship difficulties in the UK military

When investigating all military personnel in the sample, regardless of deployment status, the prevalence of divorced and separated military personnel and the prevalence of perceived relationship difficulties across the five measures (satisfaction, stability, work/relationship conflict, problems as a result of most recent deployment, and global functioning) are low. Reporting a negative impact of military career on relationships had a relatively high prevalence in comparison to the other measures.

Examinations of personnel, who had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, show the prevalence of perceived relationship dissatisfaction does not change, whereas the prevalence of having discussing divorce or separation and global relationship functioning increases. This is consistent with the finding that both of these factors are associated with deployment status. The prevalence of reports of military career having a negative impact on relationship also increases in the deployed only sample. Despite these increases, the overall prevalence still remains low.

Each of the five measures used in this thesis, examine a different dimension of perceived relationship difficulties. *"Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment"* is the measure most different from the rest as it includes perceptions of difficulties with wider family as well as romantic relationship partners, and was only included in analysis that investigated deployed personnel. The disparities in the prevalence of relationship dissatisfaction (5.5%), discussing divorce or separation (18.1%), reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship (42.6%), a global relationship functioning score of three (3.7%), and relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment (15.1%), highlights the differences between them. As Karney and Crown (2007) report, although relationship satisfaction and stability are associated, one does not necessarily predict the other. This is observable in this thesis. Discussing divorce or separation is not always due to being dissatisfied with your relationship. Moreover, although military life can be stressful and may negatively impact on relationships, military personnel's perceptions of their relationships, in the most part, remain satisfied and stable. The findings from this thesis, therefore, indicate that the majority of UK military personnel perceive their relationship to be resilient and able to cope with the additional stressors of military life.

Resiliency in the relationships of the UK military is consistent with results from the US. Anderson et al. (2011) report in their investigation of US Army soldiers, that 82% were satisfied or very satisfied with their marriages. Riggs and Riggs' (2011) theoretical paper, investigating resilience in military

families in terms of a family attachment network model, states that over the last 10 years the majority of veterans and families in the US have demonstrated a positive adaptation during and after operational deployment. Sheppard, Malatras and Israel (2010) report in their literature review that a wealth of literature supports the idea that military families are generally resilient.

Although the majority of the UK military may not experience relationship problems, for those that do the impact on their lives and military career might be quite detrimental. It is widely accepted that marital distress and instability can have negative effects for physical and emotional well-being of spouses and are leading reasons why people seek psychological assistance (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Relationship difficulties can also affect soldiers' ability to complete tasks and focus on their work. In the context of the type of work that military personnel undertake the consequences could be quite deleterious (Hoge, et al., 2006; Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011). Understanding factors that may increase the likelihood of experiencing difficulties with relationships may, therefore, be beneficial to military personnel, their partners, and the military.

Socio-demographics and relationship difficulties among UK military

Childhood adversity

Childhood adversity (childhood family relationship adversity and/or childhood antisocial behaviour) is consistently associated with all relationship difficulties examined in this thesis. This finding is consistent with a wealth of evidence showing a link between childhood trauma, adversity and maltreatment and relationship difficulties, in the general population. Whisman (2006) investigated the impact of childhood trauma on marital disruption and marital dissatisfaction and found the probability of both was higher in those who had experienced trauma (such as rape, physical attack or assault). Whisman (2006) proposes that childhood trauma may result in later disturbances with intimacy, trusting, sexual relationships, increased probability of physical violence, problems with emotional expressiveness and emotional avoidance. DeLillo et al. (2009) similarly found that a history of child maltreatment was associated with lower relationship satisfaction and predicted increased marital dysfunction over time. They report that marital distrust, decreased sexual activity, increased psychological aggression and increased trauma, mediated the association between child maltreatment and marital dysfunction.

Experiences of childhood adversity are a common pre-enlistment vulnerability in the UK Armed Forces (Iversen, et al., 2007), as the UK military, especially the Army, has historically recruited from areas of lower socio-economic status. This suggests that the UK military inadvertently

recruit certain individuals who may be at increased risk of experiencing relationship difficulties.

Unmarried relationships

Being in a long term relationship opposed to being married is associated with an increased likelihood of reporting relationship dissatisfaction, having discussed divorce or separation in the last year, reporting military career to have a negative impact on relationship, and global relationship functioning. Co-habiting compared to being married was also associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year and reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship. Being in an unmarried relationship is therefore the second most important socio-demographic factor associated with perceived relationship difficulties for UK military personnel.

As discussed previously (chapter 8, page 226), co-habiting relationships are reported to be more unstable than married relationships (Wilson & Stuchbury, 2010), this may be due to a lower level of commitment. Stanley, Marman and Whitton (2002) conducted research on the US general population investigating how communication, conflict and commitment are associated with relationship functioning. They report that having confidence in the future of the relationship, and feeling there is dedication or personal commitment to the long standing stability of the relationship, were associated with relationship satisfaction and general functioning. In terms of the differences between married and unmarried relationships, and co-habiting and non-cohabiting relationships, it seems both of these factors will

be lower in those who are unmarried and more so in those who are not cohabiting. This indicates that regardless of military status, unmarried relationships may be more likely to experience difficulties.

In the military context, this instability may be exacerbated. Maintaining a relationship in the military may be difficult due to frequent relocations, deployments, and high workload. For couples who are married, these hardships are compensated for by the benefits afforded married couples, as previously discussed (chapter 8, page 222). Frequent relocations are managed more easily when the couple are able to live together in military housing that is subsidised and relocations financially compensated for. Deployments can be made easier to manage with access to the formal welfare support offered by the military and informal support of other military spouses left behind. Anderson et al. (2011) found that US Army personnel who were dating or engaged, opposed to being married, were more likely to be in relationships that could be characterised as distressed. They report the same explanation for this based on the fact that the programs and benefits used to support married personnel and their relationships are not afforded to unmarried couples.

Children

Having children was associated with two of the relationship measures (relationship dissatisfaction and discussing divorce or separation). Research indicates that childless couples are likely to report higher levels of marital satisfaction (Ayles, 2004). A potential reason provided for this finding is that

those who have children are more likely to stay in unhappy marriages. Clarke and Berrington (1999) report that divorce is more common among childless couples as couples may stay together for the "sake of the children" . Wilson and Stuchbury (2010) suggest that not having dependent children living in the household decreases the likelihood of staying with the same partner. This indicates that although couples with children may be unhappy they may remain in their relationships to "protect" their children.

Having children may increase the likelihood of relationship difficulties for military personnel due to the parent at home, during deployments, having to manage their own separation distress as well as dealing with the separation reactions of their children (Medway, et al., 1995). A further explanation is that during deployment, the parent left behind must take on the role of single parent, they have to discipline, manage behaviour, comfort, and support the child on their own; this may lead to marital disruption (Wood, et al., 1995; Buckman, et al., 2011; Dandeker, et al., 2013). This is consistent with Ayles (2004) that parenthood role transitions and changes in commitments can create strains that influence marital quality.

Rowe et al. (2012) conducted research using data from the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) military health study (chapter 2, page 58). Using the follow-up sample, they examined change in relationship status across the two time points of phase 1 and phase 2 of the study comparing those who had and had not deployed to Iraq. One of their findings was that having children was a protective factor against negative relationship change

(for example being married to being separated). This is consistent with research from the US conducted by Karney and Crown (2011) showing that the active component of the US military were more likely to remain together if they had children. This is also consistent with the current findings as it is only discussing divorce or separation not actually being divorced or separated that is associated. Having children may increase the likelihood of discussing the future of a relationship due to the additional strains, but does not necessarily lead to the termination of the relationship. This is consistent with research from the general population that couples in dissatisfied relationships stay together for the "sake of the children", despite being unhappy in the relationship (Clarke & Berrington, 1999).

Gender

Compared to male military personnel, female military personnel are more likely to be single and divorced, separated or widowed. For military women, finding and keeping a relationship may be more difficult than for men. This is consistent with literature from the US (Segal & Segal, 2004; Adler-Baeder, et al., 2006; Karney & Crown, 2007; Karney & Crown, 2011; Karney, et al., 2012). Adler-Baeder et al. (2006) made comparisons between the marital status of females in the military and general population and found that military females were less likely to be married, more likely to be divorced and less likely to remarry post-divorce, compared to civilian women. They suggested that this direct comparison may be misleading as it does not consider differences in employment status, and so repeated the comparison with civilian career women. When comparing female military

personnel with female civilian career women, there was little difference by marital status. Adler-Baeder et al. (2006) suggest that this is due to the increased role conflict for career women between marriage and work, which may also be true for military women.

McCone and O'Donnell (2006) conducted research with US Air Force Academy graduates and found that the females were more likely to report career marriage conflict compared to males. Kelty and Segal (2013) report the same gender differences in military marital status and suggest this is due to gender differences in marriage/work role conflict in the military. They propose that military service is more compatible with the husband/father role, than it is with the wife/mother role, thus making getting and remaining married more challenging for female military personnel. This is also consistent with Breen and Cooke (2005) who suggest that relationships where women have higher labour force participation are likely to have greater marital instability, possibly due to the women's decreased need for the husband's economic production or the competition for occupational status within the relationship.

Military characteristics and relationship difficulties among UK military personnel

Deployment length

Unlike childhood adversity, none of the military characteristics are associated with all measures of perceived relationship difficulties. Deploying

for more than 13 months in a three year period was associated with reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship, global relationship functioning, and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of deployment. In the UK, Harmony Guidelines (NAO, 2006) have been produced that recommend that Army personnel should not be deployed for longer than 13 months within a three year period. Guidelines for the Royal Air Force (RAF) stipulate RAF personnel should not deploy for longer than 5 months in the same time period ("Hansard Commons Debates; Daily Hansard Written Answers," 2007) and guidelines for the Royal Navy (RN) stipulate RN personnel should not deploy for longer than 22 months in the same time period (Stanhope, 2012). The differences in these guidelines are a reflection of the different types of work undertaken and demands placed on the RN, Army and RAF.

Rona et al. (2007) report that deploying for 13 months or more in a three year period was consistently associated with problems at home during and after deployment and are at increased risk of mental health and related problems. Further to the impact on military personnel, Orthner and Rose (2009) found longer deployment length was associated with spousal mental health difficulties. Wives who were separated from their husbands for more than 12 months in a 3 year period experienced a decline in psychological well-being, and those who were separated for 18 months or more in a three year period experienced an even greater decline on a measure of psychological well-being.

Steelfisher, Zaslavsky, and Blendon (2008) report that spouses of US Army personnel who had their deployment time extended were more likely to report mental health problems, had an increased likelihood of having to leave their job or reduce their hours, and were dissatisfied with the Army. Burrell, Adams, Durand and Castro (2006) report that although military enforced separations were one of the largest predictors of relationship difficulties, the most important factor contributing to this was how the separation was perceived by both members of the couple. Riggs and Riggs (2011) report family members perceptions of military life contribute to better functioning, especially having a more positive outlook on military life and purpose. Having a negative outlook on military life may decrease resilience and increase relationship problems and the likelihood that the military personnel may leave military service (Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Despite these reports of increased difficulties experienced by spouses as a result of extended deployments, Steelfisher et al. (2008) report that deployment extension was not associated with relationship problems. This is consistent with the idea that although military life, especially deployment, may be challenging, the majority of people have the resources to have resilient relationships not negatively affected by the challenges.

Gambardella (2008) found that the couples who had the most difficulties returning to their former marital roles were those who had deployed for more than 18 months. Gambardella (2008) reports that this was related to these spouses struggling to return to their previous roles or negotiate new adjusted

roles that were mutually satisfying and acceptable. A large part of this was spouses having got used to doing things on their own and being independent (Gambardella, 2008). Spouses who learn to be independent and cope during deployment separation are likely to manage the separation successfully. Such independence over an extended time, however, may increase the challenge of reintegration post-deployment which might lead to relationship difficulties. The use of spouses whose husbands were still deployed in Steelfisher et al.'s (2008) study, may mean the lack of evidence for marital difficulties as a result of longer deployments, may be a misrepresentation.

General impact of deployment

Although deployment length is a pertinent factor associated with relationship difficulties for UK military personnel, the impact of deployment per se was inconsistent. Being divorced, separated or widowed is not associated with deployment status. This is consistent with Rowe et al.'s (2012) UK research showing deployment to Iraq is not associated with negative relationship change compared to those who did not deploy. Karney and Crown (2011) report that in the US deployment does not appear to be associated with marital dissolution, and in fact the longer some personnel are deployed the less likely marital dissolution becomes. They suggest that the additional benefits and support provided to military families during deployments help to build resilience.

Karney and Crown (2011) propose that as well as the potential negative impact deployment may have on marriages, the potential positive

enhancements have been largely overlooked. They state that in the US, deployment is associated with higher levels of pay, and can help build strength in relationships. This is supported by Gambardella (2008) who found that many wives were able to learn new skills and achieve a sense of independence which helped to enhance and manage their relationships.

Karney and Crown (2011) propose that deployments are a "normative stressor". They state that stressors normally considered detrimental to marriages are unexpected (e.g. chronic illness, unemployment) whereas deployment separations are a normative stressor for military personnel and their partners. Military personnel and their spouses expect this as part of their lives and therefore endure them from either the outset of their marriage or the outset of military service (if married before joining the military). The results from this thesis and from existing literature indicate that deploying versus having not deployed does not increase the likelihood of marital dissolution.

Although marital dissolution is not associated with deployment status, having discussed divorce or separation is. Deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, therefore, may create relationship difficulties such that the future of and commitment to the relationship are discussed, but this does not lead to termination of the relationship.

This is one of few studies examining perceived relationship difficulties and deployment rather than relationship dissolution and indicates that while

relationships may not be terminated as a result of deployment, deployment can affect perceptions of relationship stability and quality. As Schumm, Bell, and Gade (2000) report, although the relationship may be affected at the time of deployment, this is not necessarily a permanent change. ***Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the long term impact of deployment separations on relationships.***

Karney and Crown (2007) report that deployment can actually be a meaningful process compensating for the emotional challenges it may bring. Rowe et al. (2012) found that 12% of their sample reported a positive relationship change, indicating that deployment can have a positive effect on some people's relationships. Neff and Karney (2004) investigated in the US general population how cognitive processes of relationship maintenance might mediate the effects of external stress on the development of relationship satisfaction over time. They report that marriages that are good can provide a source of support and comfort in times when circumstances external to the relationship are difficult. At these times spouses experiencing stress fully appreciate the warmth and stability of the marriage. They also suggest that in the context of a healthy relationship, stressful events can provide opportunities for growth as the couple are able to develop new coping skills and use personal and social resources.

Despite this, the results in this thesis do indicate that for some military personnel operational deployment does increase the likelihood of discussing divorce or separation. In the UK, Rowe et al. (2012) report that unstable

relationships prior to deployment were more at risk of negative relationship change post-deployment. This is consistent with literature from the US. Rosen, Durand, Westhuis and Teitelbaum (1995) investigated marital adjustment in Army spouses married to soldiers who had deployed to Operation Desert Storm (January – April 1991). They found that the majority of spouses were well adjusted after their husbands returned, but for those who were not prior marital problems was one of the main predictors of later marital adjustment problems.

Schumm, Bell and Gade (2000) found a similar result in their research investigating the self-reported marital satisfaction and quality of soldiers across three time points, before, during, and after a 1995 peacekeeping deployment. They reported that there was only a moderate decline of marital satisfaction during the deployment but no overall change in the long term. Where soldiers did report low quality and satisfaction, this was mainly in soldiers who reported their marriage was experiencing difficulties prior to the deployment. It is possible that existing socio-demographic factors such as childhood adversity, being in an unmarried relationship, and having children, identified as the key factors associated with perceived relationship difficulties in this thesis, increase the likelihood of relationship difficulties pre-deployment in turn increasing the likelihood of perceiving relationship difficulties post-deployment.

Attachment theory and deployment separation

Attachment theory has been used to explain why deployment separation may be detrimental to some but not all relationships. Vormbrock (1993) proposes that deployment separation activates the attachment system, which is an adaptive and positive process for couples who have a secure attachment but is detrimental for couples with anxious or avoidant attachment relationships with their partner (chapter 1, page 47). Securely attached couples are able to effectively access internal representations and other proximity seeking methods that de-activate the attachment system and keep both partners feeling safe and secure in their relationship. Anxiously attached couples are likely to require more reassurance and feedback from their spouse which may be unavailable in the context of an operational deployment. These partners may become unhappy with the relationship and experience relationship difficulties.

This is consistent with reports from Neff and Karney (2004) in their research in the US general population. They propose that anxiously attached spouses may be more likely to view relationships negatively under stress. Pistole (2010) and Vormbrock (1993) report that avoidant couples may withdraw from each other, not offering support and becoming independent of each other, increasing the likelihood that they will then have difficulties reintegrating once the deployment is over.

The results from this thesis and the existing literature lead to the conclusion that deployment separation tests the relationships of military

personnel. Those who have strong, secure relationships with no pre-existing problems or vulnerabilities are able to adapt and manage the additional challenges deployment separation may bring. Those who have pre-existing relationship difficulties or vulnerabilities may be at increased risk of reporting having experienced relationship difficulties as the additional stressors of deployment test the resilience and strength of the relationship. Deploying for more than 13 months in a three year period is the most pertinent factor associated with experiencing difficulties, arguably because the extended length creates more of a test, especially for those with pre-existing difficulties and vulnerabilities.

Reserve personnel

Reserve personnel were more likely to report perceiving being dissatisfied with their relationship, whereas regular personnel were more likely to report having discussed divorce or separation and a negative impact of military career on relationship. There are some key differences between regular and reserve personnel; reserve personnel tend to be older, have higher educational attainment, often deploy as individual augmentees, meaning they deploy to an operational role without members of their usual home unit, and have the additional challenge of leaving partners and families who may not understand the military and available support (Browne, et al., 2007).

The increased likelihood of reporting dissatisfaction in reserves may be attributable to their older age and the associated possibility that they would have been in their relationship for longer. Karney and Bradbury (1995)

report that whilst marriages tend to become more stable over time, they are also likely to become less satisfying. In comparison, if regular personnel are more likely to be younger, their relationships are more likely to be less stable; as stated previously, research suggests that people who marry younger and relationships formed more recently are likely to be less stable (Wilson & Stuchbury, 2010; Karney & Crown, 2011).

Regular personnel are more likely to report a negative impact of their military career on their relationship compared to reserves; this makes sense since reserves choose to join the military as an activity in their free time, whereas for regulars their military career becomes their life. An additional interpretation of this result could be that dissatisfying relationships motivate people to join the reserves. Furthermore, the difference between regulars reporting a negative impact and reserves being more likely to report relationship dissatisfaction highlights the differences between the measures of relationship difficulties used. Just because someone may be experiencing a high level of work/relationship conflict does not necessarily mean that their relationship is dissatisfied.

Despite the fact that regular personnel have the compensations and benefits from the military, thought to increase the stability of their relationships, it is regular personnel who are more likely to discuss divorce or separation. Although a couple may have discussed divorce or separation, this does not mean that they will terminate the relationship, instead this could be an

indication that the relationships of regular personnel, in comparison to reserves, are less stable and experience more difficulties.

Service and rank

Burland and Lunquist (2013) propose that the impact of military service on families will vary depending on the type of military service. Being in the Army and being an NCO, compared to being an officer, were associated with an increased likelihood of being divorced, separated, or widowed and with having discussed divorce or separation in the last year. This indicates that being in the Army and being an NCO are pertinent military characteristics associated with an increased risk of marital instability and dissolution.

The association between being in the Army and relationship instability may be attributable to the increased likelihood of Army personnel having experienced childhood adversity, as recruiting of Army personnel often occurs in lower social economic areas of the UK (Iversen, et al., 2007). Each military service has different working styles, demands, roles, and responsibilities. The Army are reported to deploy more and have more ground combat involvement (Hosek & Martorell, 2011). In the context that deployment and deploying for longer than 13 months in three years are associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year this may explain this association.

Rowe et al. (2012) found that for those who had deployed, NCOs were more likely to have experienced negative relationship change compared to officers.

They propose that this increased risk for NCOs could be related to younger age; as stated previously, younger age at marriage is associated with relationship instability (Karney & Crown, 2007). The possibility of an age effect is consistent with results indicating younger military personnel are more likely to be divorced compared to the general population of the same age group (results chapter 3, page 104).

Karney and Crown (2007) suggest that enlisted US military members (the equivalent of UK NCO) are at higher risk than officers for marriage difficulties and attribute this to age differences, stating that increased age is positively associated with the likelihood of a marriage remaining intact. This is also consistent with Anderson et al. (2011) who report that US Army soldiers of lower ranks have an increased likelihood of reporting having a distressed relationship. They attributed this to the fact that lower ranks tend to be younger, less educated and have a lower socio-economic status thus making them more vulnerable to relationship difficulties.

The life stage of the soldiers, such as being new parents or newly married, may be attributable to the association between relationship difficulties and being an NCO. The younger age of NCOs means they are quite likely to be at life transition stages such as newly married and new parents. Segal (1986) raise the importance of considering life transitions and stages when considering the relationships of military personnel. Newlyweds, especially where they married young, and young parents are at increased risk of

relationship instability as they attempt to navigate and adapt to new roles and lifestyles (Ayles, 2004; Karney & Crown, 2007).

Rowe et al. (2012) propose that NCOs may be less experienced in coping with deployment and, therefore, be at increased risk of relationship difficulties. The finding in this thesis is regardless of deployment status, but it may still be applicable that officers are more experienced at managing their relationships in the context of military life generally, not just in the case of deployment separations. It is also possible that the social expectations and constraints of being an officer may lead to officers feeling less able to get divorced due to their social and rank position. This is consistent with Finnegan, Finnegan, McGee, Srinivasan and Simpson (2010) who report that senior ranking soldiers may feel that they have an image to uphold of being strong, to their troops. This could also be related to social exchange theory in terms of the potential losses based on their positioning within the military. This is, however, only conjecture and requires further investigation.

Serving status

Those who were still serving compared to those who had left service were more likely to report a negative impact of military career on relationship and global relationship functioning. The competing demands of military work and relationships and family are well documented (Segal, 1986; Karney & Crown, 2007; Dandeker, et al., 2013). Military work involves employment patterns such as shift work, long hours, regular work enforced separations, and relocations (sometimes to overseas destinations), which are likely to

impact on personal well-being and family stress (Orthner & Rose, 2009). These characteristics feature in some civilian jobs, however, in the military context these demands not only happen concurrently, but compliance with such work demands is not optional (Jarvis, 2011). Segal (1986) described both the military and family as "greedy institutions". It is, therefore, arguable that once having left service, these competing demands are no longer a potential cause of relationship distress.

Contrary to this explanation, Kelty and Segal (2013) report that there are higher levels of marital dissolution in those who have left service compared to the general population. They propose that military service is in fact a buffer against marital stress due to the infrastructures and support military service offers; once these are gone, marriages may be negatively affected. Leaving service means giving up the benefits and compensations afforded to married couples to assist them in maintaining their relationships. Losing the financial security, subsidised home, and school places, may have a negative impact on relationships.

It is possible that those who leave do so because they are having relationship problems. Burrell, Adams, Duran, and Castro (2006) report that military work demands are related to spouse well-being, attitudes, and adjustment as well as to soldier well-being, morale and retention. As Jarvis (2011) suggests, the retention of married military personnel may be influenced by their spouse supporting their desire to remain in the Armed Forces depending upon the impact their military career has on their spouse and lifestyle. It

seems that based on the current results and nature of the cross sectional data of this thesis there are two possible scenarios; personnel leave the military due to relationship problems which in turn are resolved, as supported by the results in this thesis; or, leaving exposes the relationship to vulnerabilities and increased reporting of problems because the military was a protective factor against relationship difficulties, as supported by the literature from Kelty and Segal (2013) and the possible effect of the cross sectional data. It is probable that both eventualities are equally as likely. ***The long term effect of military service on relationships requires more investigation.***

Deployment-related factors associated with relationship difficulties

Home front stressors during deployment

Investigation of only those military personnel who had deployed shows that home front stressors are the most important deployment-related experiences associated with perceiving relationship difficulties. Military personnel often report that home front stressors are one of the largest contributing factors to their stress making deployments more challenging (Vormbrock, 1993; Greene, et al., 2010). Results from this thesis show home front stressors, as well as making deployment more stressful, are the main stressor increasing the likelihood of UK military personnel perceiving their romantic relationships to be problematic.

Reporting that family did not provide enough support whilst deployed was associated with all five relationship difficulties, making this as pertinent a factor as childhood adversity. Believing the military did not provide enough support to spouse whilst deployed and financial difficulties were associated with all relationship difficulties except relationship dissatisfaction. This is consistent with results from Rowe et al. (2012). They report that financial difficulties, believing the military did not provide enough support to their spouse, and family not providing enough support whilst deployed, were associated with negative relationship change in UK military personnel deployed to Iraq.

Not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed

Not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed is associated with relationship dissatisfaction, discussing divorce or separation in the last year, reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship, experiencing relationship or family problems as a result of deployment, and global relationship functioning. Receiving support from a partner can buffer relationships from the effects of external stress, such as work enforced separations (Neff & Karney, 2004). It is reported that married service personnel are a source of support to each other especially during times of deployment, however, a risk is if the experience of deployment frays this relationship (Hosek & Martorell, 2011). From their interviews with military personnel and their spouses, Baptist et al. (2011) report that those able to seek out and rely on their marital partner for support are better able to cope

and adapt to the stress of deployments and are more likely to report continued closeness and intimacy in their marriage.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) support these claims with their examination of the work/family conflict literature from the general population. They report that spouses who are supportive protect each other from experiencing high levels of work/family conflict, thus protecting themselves from relationship difficulties. Lack of support may, therefore, increase the likelihood of experiencing conflict between work and family. This is consistent with the finding that reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship is associated with not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed.

The likelihood of family not providing enough support to military personnel during deployments may be increased in spouses who have an avoidant attachment. Having an avoidant attachment may mean that during deployment they withdraw to protect themselves (Riggs & Riggs, 2011). This could lead to the spouse being unavailable to offer support in turn leaving their deployed military partner unsupported and vulnerable to the stressors of deployment.

Attachment bonds and relationships are maintained and managed during separations through proximity seeking behaviours such as regular and supportive contact (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Baptist et al. (2011) found that a key to maintaining positive relationship experiences, including satisfactory levels of intimacy, whilst deployed was through constant contact. Constant

contact and sharing of meaningful dialogue assisted in maintaining a strong marital bond. This is consistent with Hinojosa, Hinojosa, and Hognas (2012) who report that the quality and quantity of communication between partners is related to intimate relationship satisfaction. During deployment separations, however, selective disclosure about deployment activities and restrictions on the frequency of communication may lead to relationship challenges (Hinojosa, et al., 2012).

Baptist et al. (2011), in accord with Hinjosa et al. (2012), found that some of the soldiers in their study reported being selective about how much and what they disclosed to their partners during their deployments and that this had at times caused difficulties in their relationships. Baptist et al. (2011) propose that this inability to disclose and confide in their wives whilst they were deployed may have prevented the service member from receiving support. They withheld sharing their experiences in order to protect their wives, which meant in the absence of sharing their experiences they were left listening to their wives and supporting them but not having this reciprocated. It is possible that this could have been the cause for the lack of support experienced by some of the military personnel in this thesis.

Maintaining regular communication during deployments may be restricted due to the environment the military personnel work in. Resources and technology may be restricted and communication be compounded due to the communication security needs of the military (often called COMSEC in the UK and OPSEC in the US) (Greene, et al., 2010; Hinojosa, et al., 2012).

Military personnel and their families are reported to have high expectations of the level, frequency, and variety of communication media available (Greene, et al., 2010). At times, however, it is not possible for these expectations to be met. It is possible that the insufficient support provided by families for some military personnel could be the result of communication challenges which are out of the hands of the families. Greene et al. (2010) propose that ensuring military personnel and their families have realistic expectations of the frequency of communication available during separations may help minimise relationship difficulties.

Military providing enough support for spouse during deployment

Support is a protective factor associated with successful coping in stressful situations (Karney & Crown, 2011). Military personnel believing their spouse did not receive enough support from the military during deployment separation is also associated with perceived relationship difficulties. This is consistent with the findings from Rowe et al.'s (2012) UK study that believing the military did not provide enough support for spouse whilst deployed was associated with an increased likelihood of reporting a negative relationship change.

Dandeker et al. (2013) report that UK military personnel's perceptions that their families are being supported and looked after whilst they are deployed contributes to their morale. This is consist with Rohall, et al. (1999) stating that leader support for soldiers and their families is important for family adjustment. This is partially due to the reassurance it provides soldiers that

their families are being cared for. Rosen and Durand (1995) found being dissatisfied with the amount of support the military provided spouses and families was predictive of junior enlisted US Army soldiers leaving service. This could be due to the impact this has on their families; as Jarvis (2011) suggests, decisions to remain within the military are often based upon spouses happiness with Army life.

Being confident about the amount of support available for partners and family at home during deployment separations is reported to reduce concerns about separation and perceived problems on the home front which in turn reduces the likelihood of military personnel developing mental health problems (Mulligan et al., 2012). Erbes (2011) reports that reassurance to service members about their family's well-being may assist them in managing the stressors of deployment. If soldiers have to worry about the support and coping of their partners at home they may be more likely to have difficulties concentrating on their work and be vulnerable to the stressors of deployment, which in turn may create difficulties once they return home.

Karney and Crown (2011) report that one reason for their finding that deployment was not associated with relationship problems could be due to the specific institutionalised sources of support offered to military personnel and their families. This is consistent with Orthner and Rose (2009) who state that secondary support systems such as those provided by a partner's work organisation provide a supportive set of services that help make work enforced separations more manageable. Desivlya and Gal (1996) conducted

research investigating the coping patterns in the families of Israeli military personnel. They identified three types of well-adjusted families and three types of un-reconciled families. A common feature across all three well-adjusted family types was the presence and use of organisational support.

Morrice and Taylor (1978) coined the term "Intermittent Husband Syndrome" based on the pattern of symptoms exhibited by women presenting at a psychiatric unit near Aberdeen, all of who's husbands were employed off-shore in the oil industry. The pattern of symptoms included anxiety, depression, and sexual difficulties which would lead to problems in their marital relationships. Busuttil and Busuttil (2001) refer to this syndrome and apply it to their literature review of the experiences of spouses of military personnel during deployment separations. They report that "intermittent husband syndrome" is more likely to occur in wives who do not receive enough social support whilst their husband is away.

Although it is likely that spouses not receiving support from the military during deployment may impact on their relationship with their military partner, it is also possible that, for some, the difficulties may be related to the expectations military personnel and their partners' have of what support the military should provide. This is consistent with Saltzman et al. (2011) who report that support expectations are associated with risk and resiliency in military families.

Rowe et al. (2012) raise the possibility of recall bias in their finding that negative relationship change is associated with military personnel believing the military did not provide their spouse with enough support. They suggest that potential recall bias may be due to military personnel being more inclined to blame the military for their spouses feeling unsupported or for any relationship problems that ensued following deployment. Coolbaugh and Rosenthal (1992) report that whilst US military personnel and their spouses perceive military provided support systems to be extremely important and useful, very few actually use these services.

It is evident that support from family and support for family are essential for the successful navigation and adjustment of deployment separations for the relationships of military personnel. Limited support in both cases creates vulnerabilities for coping which negatively impact on the relationship. This may be due to the direct absence of required or expected support or as a result of unrealistic expectations of communication facilities and available services.

Financial difficulties

As well as support, experiencing financial difficulties at home increases the likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties. This is consistent with Rowe et al. (2012) and Karney and Crown (2011) who report that financial difficulties are significantly associated with a higher risk of relationship dissolution compared to couples in more supportive environments. Buckman

et al. (2011) suggest financial problems are often the result of extended or longer deployments.

As previously discussed, deployed personnel need to be able to give their full attention to their work whilst on deployment and not be distracted from their duties by family matters (Wood, et al., 1995; Erbes, 2011; Mulligan, et al., 2012). Financial problems have been found to be a much larger contributor to soldier anxiety than spouse anxiety (Coolbaugh & Rosenthal, 1992). A possible explanation for this could be in the context of military personnel wanting to have the confidence that if they were to be killed or injured during deployment their family would be taken care of. Reger and Moore (2009) report that financial stability is a large part of this. Without feeling this confidence, military personnel may struggle to focus their attention on their mission, thus increasing the possibility of experiencing poor relationship adjustment during deployment.

Easier adjustment during separation for spouses is related to having good financial resources (Wood, et al., 1995). Poor adjustment in spouses can lead to mental health problems and difficulties coping (De Burgh, White, Fear, & Iversen, 2011). Coping in spouses is an important factor associated with relationship difficulties during and after deployment separations (Wood, et al., 1995). Experiencing financial difficulties is not only associated with wives adjustment but also their perceptions of how well they coped with the separation (Coolbaugh & Rosenthal, 1992). Moreover, it is reported that soldiers are proud of spouses who handled family affairs well in their

absence which leads to better relationship adjustment and positive views about future separations for both military personnel and their partner (Coolbaugh & Rosenthal, 1992; Wood, et al., 1995).

Work related stressors during deployment

As well as the home front stressors, work related deployment experiences associated with relationship difficulties have been identified. These are not, however, as pertinent as the home front stressors.

Work was above trade, experience, or ability

Reporting deployment based work, to be above trade, experience, or ability, is associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year, reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship, and global relationship functioning. Increased job demand is widely reported to increase conflict between work and family. Voydanoff (1988) reported that work/family conflict arises due to the time required to perform each role, and the psychological carryover of gratification or strain from one role to the other. In situations where stress is high in one domain, such as if you feel your work is above your ability, the stress will carry over into the functioning of the other domain, the relationship. This is consistent with theories of stress spill over (Neff & Karney, 2004) and role expansion theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Role expansion theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001) takes this a step further and proposes that positive experiences or being satisfied in one role helps to shape positive experience and performance in other roles. In the context of

deployment when the role as relationship partner is already strained, the addition of increased work stress and strain is likely to exacerbate the potential for relationship difficulties. This is consistent with the fact that high job satisfaction is a feature of all the well-adjusted family types outlined by Desivlya and Gal (1996). They report that problems or difficulties with work are an antecedent and mediating factor shaping coping and family outcomes.

Combat exposure

Combat exposure has been a factor frequently considered to be a stress vulnerability leading to relationship problems when military personnel return home post-deployment (Gimbel & Booth, 1994; Ruger, et al., 2002; Burland & Lundquist, 2013). Although links between combat and marital outcomes have been reported the retrospective methods and focus on historical wars in these studies makes the usefulness and amount to which the findings can be generalised to the more recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan questionable. More recent research has found that combat exposure is unrelated to marital quality (Renshaw, Rodrigues, & Jones, 2008; Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, WIlk, & Bliese, 2012).

In the current study, combat exposure was found to be associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of deployment. This provides evidence for the partial acceptance of the hypothesis for aim 3 (chapter 2, page 55). This is consistent with Rowe et al.'s (2012) findings that negative relationship change was only associated with handling bodies and experiencing hostility

from civilians. In results chapter 5 (page 202), it is shown that believing to be in serious danger of injury or death is associated with reporting relationship problems as a result of deployment and global relationship functioning. Time spent in a hostile area was associated with reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship.

Combat experiences during deployment may be associated with perceived relationship difficulties due to the relationships military personnel must forge with their unit and comrades during combat based deployments. Currier, Holland, and Allen (2012) state that during combat deployments, the relationships forged with other members of the unit represent those of attachment relationships with primary attachment figures. Currier et al. (2012) suggest that if this type of relationship is not forged, this could lead to a sense of alienation from the unit leading them to become emotionally avoidant. If they continue being emotionally avoidant once they return home, they may experience difficulties reintegrating with their wives. This is consistent with Basham (2008) who proposes that combat exposure can alter existing attachment securities with family and partners at home based on their experiences with leaders and comrades during combat exposure.

Support from unit whilst deployed

Military personnel who felt that they could not go to anyone in their unit for support with personal problems were more likely to report relationship dissatisfaction. Receiving support from both primary sources such as family and friends and secondary sources such as organisational and peer support is

crucial for successful adaptation during work enforced relationship separations (Desivlya & Gal, 1996; Orthner & Rose, 2009). Not having close supportive relationships with comrades could lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased work/family conflict (Story & Repetti, 2006). Not feeling you could go to others in your unit for support with personal problems during a deployment separation may also be consistent with Currier et al.'s (2012) suggestion that those who do not form primary attachment relationships with their comrades may become emotionally detached leading to problems reintegrating with their partner when they return home.

Prevalence of symptoms of Common Mental Disorders (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Comparisons of the prevalence of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse between the entire UK military sample and only those in a relationship demonstrated lower prevalence in those military personnel who were in a relationship. Consistent with previous research from the US general population (Ross, 1995; Simon, 2002) and the US military (Riviere, Kendell-Robbins, McGurk, Castro, & Hoge, 2011; Ponder, Aguirre, Smith-Osborne, & Granvold, 2012) the finding in this thesis indicates that being in a relationship can protect against developing mental health and alcohol misuse. This is consistent with Iversen et al. (2008) who report that being unmarried is a risk factor for PTSD in UK military personnel.

Although being in a relationship appears to be a protective factor against experiencing symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse, those that do experience these symptoms are more likely to report relationship difficulties. Chapter 6 shows that symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse were consistently associated with perceived relationship dissatisfaction, discussing divorce or separation in the last year, reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship, global relationship functioning, and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment. This is consistent with the findings from Rowe et al. (2012) who report that negative relationship change in UK military personnel who have deployed to Iraq is associated with probable PTSD, symptoms of CMD, binge drinking and alcohol misuse. Due to the cross sectional nature of the data used in this thesis, however, it is possible that both causal directions are possible and relationship difficulties may also cause, maintain or exacerbate mental health symptoms or alcohol misuse (Marshal, 2003; Miller et al., 2013).

Mediation effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse

The potential mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, and alcohol misuse in the associations between socio-demographic, military characteristics, and deployment-related factors and perceived relationship difficulties were investigated. Previous research from the US indicates that

combat exposure may increase the likelihood of experiencing mental health symptoms that in turn impact negatively on relationships (Renshaw, et al., 2009; Allen, et al., 2010; Miller, et al., 2013).

In this thesis, combat exposure is associated with discussing divorce or separation and relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment, but with a small effect size. In opposition to the findings from the US, and the hypothesis for aim 4 (chapter 1, page 56), no mediating effect of symptoms of CMD, probable PTSD, or alcohol misuse is found for associations between combat exposure and discussing divorce or separation or relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment. It should be noted that the lack of evidence for a mediating effect could be due to limited power in these analyses, meaning a type two error (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2003) may have occurred in this instance.

Although, there was not a mediation effect identified in the case of combat exposure, in this thesis, indication of other mediation effects were found in results chapter 6.

Relationship satisfaction

The addition of symptoms of CMD to the multivariable regression model for relationship satisfaction changed the association with not feeling you could go to others in your unit for support with personal problems. This indicates that symptoms of CMD mediate the impact of limited unit support on relationship satisfaction.

The UK military doctrine promotes group identity and cohesion as a way to protect military personnel and prevent them from developing mental health symptoms, especially in those facing combat (Hockey, 1986; Jones et al., 2012). Jones et al. (2012) found that lower levels of symptoms of CMD are associated with higher levels of leadership, morale and cohesion even when adjusting for combat exposure.

The current findings and the results from Jones et al. (2012) indicate that in the absence of unit cohesion and good leadership the likelihood of developing symptoms of CMD is increased, which in turn may create relationship difficulties as manifest by relationship dissatisfaction. The cross sectional nature of the data used in both this thesis and Jones et al.'s (2012) research means that reverse causation could also be possible; existing relationship problems that might lead to symptoms of CMD could be managed during deployment by good unit cohesion and being able to go to others in the unit for support. This is supported by the results from Mulligan et al. (2012) who found that relationship breakdown experienced during deployment was associated with symptoms of CMD; when adjusting for leadership and cohesion there was no longer an association with symptoms of CMD.

Jones et al. (2012) suggest that one barrier to wanting to talk to others in military units about personal problems may be due to the stigma attached to expressing emotion in the military context. Jones et al. report that positive leader behaviours such as encouraging help seeking for personnel problems

may offset the stigma that is known to impact on stress and help seeking. This is consistent with Finnegan et al. (2010) who report that poor leadership and management is often a feature of deployment experiences in soldiers presenting for help with mental health concerns.

Impact of military career on relationship

A mediation effect was identified indicating the association between not feeling informed about what was happening in your unit and reporting a negative impact of military career on relationship is mediated by symptoms of CMD. As discussed above, Jones et al. (2012) highlight the importance of a cohesive unit with good leadership. In the absence of both of these, the likelihood of experiencing symptoms of CMD is increased. This result indicates that in turn the development of symptoms of CMD is likely to lead to military personnel reporting their military career to have a negative impact on their relationship.

Global relationship functioning

The association between childhood antisocial behaviour and global relationship functioning is mediated by symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse. This is consistent with Iversen et al (2007) who found that childhood adversity is associated with symptoms of CMD and heavy alcohol use, as well as symptoms of PTSD, smoking and self-harming behaviours. It seems that childhood antisocial behaviour increases the likelihood of experiencing relationship problems due to the associated symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse.

Symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse mediate the association between work being above trade, ability and experience and global relationship functioning. Finnegan et al. (2010) report that soldiers often cope with stressors through the use of alcohol, especially in the context of the military culture where drinking behaviours are generally tolerated but expressions of stress or weakness are not. This is consistent with other reports from the UK that work being above the ability, experience or trade of military personnel was associated with symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse (Wessely & Dandeker, 2006). The impact of alcohol misuse on marital relationships, in the general population, has been documented by Marshal (2003) who reports that relationships where one or both partners have an alcohol problem are less positive and engage in less problem solving behaviour and more maladaptive behaviour problems than couples where neither partner reports alcohol misuse. Meis et al. (2010) report that in soldiers returning from deployments, drinking has a clear and consistent association with marital dissatisfaction, negative couple interactions, and intimate partner violence.

Symptoms of CMD and alcohol mediating the association between work being above trade, experience, and ability and global relationship functioning highlights the importance of military personnel feeling prepared for their work and placed in roles appropriate to their skills. The development of alcohol problems may be a maladaptive coping strategy for managing their work stress (Marshal, 2003) which may lead to symptoms of CMD. Symptoms of CMD and alcohol misuse, however, may not only have a

detrimental impact on military personnel's operational functioning and well-being, but may also increase the likelihood of developing relationship problems.

Overall Discussion

The majority of the UK military are in relationships and the majority of these are married. Military personnel marry younger and divorce younger compared to the general population. Military personnel under the age of 30 years are more likely to be divorced but, over the age of 30 years are less likely to be divorced, this is in contradiction to media reports and "common sense" assumptions (Burland & Lundquist, 2013). Female military personnel are vulnerable to difficulties forming and maintaining relationships. This has been attributed to the additional challenges for women in managing work and family demands.

The benefits and compensations afforded married military personnel may play an important role in the formation and maintenance of marriages in the UK military. The benefits and compensations can have a positive impact on marriages as they assist to increase resources and strengthen the resiliency of relationships, making them more able to cope with military life as a whole and with the challenges associated with relocations and deployments. A cautionary factor is the potential that the benefits and compensations may also be maintaining relationships that are unhappy and dissatisfied.

Examination of perceived relationship difficulties in the UK military shows that the majority of military personnel believe their relationships to be

satisfied, stable, functioning, and able to manage the potential work/family conflict caused by the nature of military work. This is consistent with and adds to the growing literature indicating that, contrary to popular belief, most relationships of military personnel are resilient, strong, and able to cope with the additional strains of military life. The resiliency reported in military relationships has been attributed to the benefits and compensations afforded married military personnel, personal resources, and coping abilities (Sheppard, et al., 2010; Anderson, et al., 2011; Karney & Crown, 2011; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). For those who do perceived difficulties in their relationships the most pertinent factors increasing vulnerability are socio-demographics including childhood family relationship adversity and childhood antisocial behaviour, being in an unmarried relationship, and having children.

Childhood adversity as a vulnerability to relationship problems is well documented and attributed to problems with intimacy, trusting, emotional expressiveness and avoidance (Nelson & Wampler, 2000; Whisman, 2006), as well as having insecure attachments (Whisman, 2006; DeLillo, et al., 2009). Throughout the quantitative results of this thesis, evidence indicates that childhood adversity is also associated with an increased likelihood of UK military personnel perceiving difficulties with their relationships. Being in the Army is associated with an increased risk of instability and being divorced or separated. One reason for this was attributed to the Army recruiting from lower socio-economic areas where there is an increased chance of having experienced adversities as a child. Alcohol use is also

associated with childhood adversity which has been shown to lead to the most severe relationship difficulties as indicated by a global relationship functioning score of three. It is evident by this convergence of findings that childhood adversity is the most pertinent factor increasing vulnerability for relationship difficulties in UK military personnel.

Unmarried relationships are at increased vulnerability of perceiving relationship problems due to the diminished commitment and stability (Stanley, et al., 2002) creating weakness in the relationships. This is exacerbated in the military context due to the lack of access to the benefits and compensations afforded married personnel that would have helped build strength and resiliency in these relationships. During times of deployment when the strength of relationships are tested, these relationships will suffer due to limited access to support and the financial security married personnel have.

Having children increases vulnerability in the military context due to the additional strain it places on the spouse left behind during deployments (Wood, et al., 1995; Buckman, et al., 2011; Dandeker, et al., 2013). In addition, it is noted that having children increases vulnerability when deployments are for longer than 13 months in a three year period. This may be due to the spouse having to leave work to provide child care which in turn leads to financial problems also associated with an increased risk of relationship difficulties.

As well as the socio-demographics, the other most pertinent factors shown to increase the likelihood of perceiving relationship problems are related to inadequate home front buffers to the stressors of deployment being available. Not receiving enough support from family whilst deployed and spouses not receiving enough support from the military whilst deployed were key factors increasing the likelihood of perceived relationship difficulties. Lack of support for either member of the relationship can have detrimental effects on the relationships of UK military personnel. Financial problems at home create vulnerability in relationships likely to lead to difficulties. All three of these factors are also exacerbated by longer deployments and can be associated with family's ability to provide support. Military personnel experiencing these factors are likely to have diminished personnel resiliency for coping with military life, especially deployments, in turn weakening the resiliency of their relationship making them susceptible to difficulties.

The results of the quantitative studies can be best understood as indicating a series of vulnerability factors that increase the likelihood of perceived relationship difficulties. The most important factors associated with all of the relationship difficulties are childhood adversity and not receiving enough support from spouse whilst deployed. The socio-demographic factors (childhood adversity, unmarried relationships, and having children) and home front issues (not enough support from spouse, not enough support from military for spouse, and financial problems at home) are more important in understanding the perceived relationship difficulties of the UK military than any military characteristics or deployment-related experiences. This is not to

discount the military characteristics and deployment-related factors shown to be associated, however, it is to be highlighted that the factors most pertinent would be vulnerabilities for those experiencing difficulties regardless of their military status. The specific military factors (deployment, time deployed, work being above trade, experience and ability) test the resiliency of relationships which coupled with the socio-demographic and home front vulnerabilities indicates an elevated risk of reporting problems with their relationships.

Strengths and Limitations

This thesis is one of few pieces of research investigating the relationships of the UK military. Furthermore, it is the first UK study investigating the relationships of the UK military from the military personnel's perspective engaging in a holistic examination of military life and its impact on relationships. The strength of the findings of this research is their consistency with other research conducted in both the UK and US.

The use of a large representative sample of the UK Armed Forces means it is possible to generalize these results to the UK Armed Forces. The inclusion of different relationship types (married, co-habiting, long term) rather than just focusing on married couples; female military personnel as well as male personnel; and, investigating the military career as a whole, not just deployment periods, adds to current literature due to its increased representativeness.

Karney and Crown (2007) suggest that to gain a fuller understanding of the relationships of military personnel investigations need to move past looking purely at relationship dissolution and divorce rates and examine relationship quality. A further strength of this thesis is that it investigates marital status and relationship quality. Moreover, five different measures to assess relationship quality were used. As Karney and Crown (2007) highlight, relationship stability and quality although linked do not predict each other. By using different measures this thesis provides information on the relationships of UK military personnel across several domains of relationship quality leading to a deeper understanding of the relationships of UK military personnel.

A limitation of this study is that these results are from the military personnel's perspective only. Relying on one member of the partnership may give a biased view of the relationship, as couples often perceive their relationship differently (Karney & Crown, 2007). This is highlighted in Renshaw et al.'s (2008) study investigating how spouse's perceptions of their military personnel spouse's PTSD symptoms and combat experiences affect how they report relationship difficulties. Wives were more likely to report relationship difficulties when they perceived the military spouses' combat experiences to be minimal or when the military spouse did not endorse their PTSD symptoms.

The cross sectional nature of the data used in this thesis means that causation cannot be inferred. This raises some specific difficulties in terms of marriage

status; we do not know if the marriages which participants reported were their first marriage, or subsequent marriages. Adler-Beader et al. (2006) allude to the importance of this information in terms of knowing rates of re-marriage. Furthermore, the course and functioning of re-marriages are thought to have nuanced trajectories and challenges (Adler-Baeder, et al., 2006). A further failing of the cross sectional data is not knowing whether they were in their relationship when they joined the military or commenced their relationship subsequent to their military careers. Wilmoth and London (2013) raise this as an important point as they propose that already being in a relationship when joining could have more negative effects on the relationship as it could change the course of the relationship trajectory. There might be differences in the vulnerabilities between those who form their relationships once they have joined the military and those who had an established relationship before joining.

The effect of limited power is a likely problem especially when investigating probable PTSD due to the low prevalence in this sample.

Conclusion

The relationships of the UK military are mainly strong and resilient and manage with the additional strains of military life. For the minority that do experience relationship difficulties, the quantitative studies have highlighted key factors associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties. The most pertinent factors are the socio-demographic factors and home front affairs. These factors are likely to increase the vulnerability of any relationship to difficulties; this is, however,

exacerbated in the military context, especially during operational deployment.

CHAPTER 9: QUALITATIVE STUDY OVERVIEW

The qualitative section of this thesis adds to the quantitative results by addressing aim 5 of this thesis. The fifth and final aim of this thesis was to use a qualitative method to understand the experiences of UK military personnel in terms of how they manage and maintain their romantic relationships in the context of military life, specifically during times of deployment. This section presents the method, results, and discussion of a qualitative study conducted with male UK Army personnel investigating their experiences of managing and maintaining their romantic relationships. The experiential first person data presented in this section adds depth and detail to the quantitative data already presented.

CHAPTER 10: QUALITATIVE METHOD

The fifth aim of my thesis is to use a qualitative study to understand the experiences of UK military personnel in terms of how they manage and maintain their romantic relationships in the context of military life, specifically during times of deployment. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is considered the most appropriate qualitative method to address this aim. In this chapter, a brief overview of what is IPA, how it compares to other qualitative methods and the justification for its use in this thesis is presented. This is followed by information about the participants and recruitment procedure, materials and the design of the interview schedule, pilot interviews, study interviews, ethical considerations, and the analysis process using IPA.

What is IPA?

IPA is a qualitative research method that aims to gain a detailed and deep understanding of a certain topic by exploring how participants make sense of their personal and social world in reference to their experiences of the given topic. The epistemology of IPA is firmly rooted in phenomenology and hermeneutics (Smith, et al., 2009). Attempts at understanding personal experience and the world is seen as an active process of continuously developing perspectives and meanings which are unique to each individual and relative to their distinctive relationship with the world (Smith, et al., 2009).

IPA aims to gain knowledge about the given topic of investigation, through interpretation of participants experiences; IPA is, therefore, influenced by Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Hermeneutics acknowledges the role our existing perceptions and understanding plays in the process of making sense of the world as we experience it. The process of understanding is a cyclical relationship between part and whole. That is, to make sense of the world and our experiences we must understand each part of it, but to understand the parts we must understand and consider the whole (Smith, et al., 2009). Based on the phenomenological and hermeneutic focus of IPA, research that uses this approach is "committed to exploring, describing, interpreting, and situating the means by which our participants make sense of their experiences" (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p. 110).

IPA versus other methods

Within qualitative research, there are various methods available which lend themselves to different epistemological and ontological frameworks (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). The epistemological and ontological framework of a chosen research approach dictates how and what we can say we know about the world. This in turn dictates what the researcher is able to find out. Consequently, when choosing the most suitable method for a qualitative project ensuring the posited question matches the epistemology of any chosen method is an essential starting point (Smith, 2004; Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

IPA aims to move past the descriptive towards an interpretative account of the data. This is where it differs from content and thematic analysis (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Whilst content and thematic analysis are good inductive approaches, they are not able to produce the right level of depth of interpretation required when asking questions that aim to uncover how a certain phenomenon (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) such as being married whilst serving in the military, is understood and experienced.

IPA also differs to other qualitative methods through its acknowledgement of the role of the researcher. Smith (2009) proposes that in the commitment to hermeneutics not only should the interpretation of the participant in understanding their experiences be acknowledged but also the interpretations of the researcher. This is what Smith (2009) refers to as the "double hermeneutic", the researcher attempting to make sense and interpret the participants' experience, understanding, and interpretation, of a particular phenomenon. This is in contrast to Grounded Theory (GT) which perceives the researcher as witness to the theory which emerges from the data (Willig, 2008).

GT differs substantially from IPA in its focus on uncovering social process and its aim to develop new theory (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Thus, the nature of this approach would not have been appropriate in investigating the question posited in this study. Its focus on understanding experiences and events as a social process (Willig, 2008) mean a GT investigation of the marital relationships of military personnel would focus on understanding the

social process of being married in the military rather than individual experiences and how these experiences are understood.

Justification for choice of methodology used in this thesis

This qualitative study gained data that will lead to a detailed understanding of what is it like, and how do military personnel manage, being married whilst serving in the military. The focus on understanding the experiences of military personnel in terms of their lives as married military personnel makes IPA the method of choice due to its commitment to making sense of personal and social worlds (Smith, et al., 2009).

The aim of this qualitative study is to give voice to and delve into the experiences of male military personnel's marital relationships in the context of their military career. To my knowledge, there are no existing studies investigating the marital relationships of serving UK military personnel from their perspective. It is suggested that IPA can be particularly useful when research is concerned with complexity, process, or novelty (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Based on this, IPA (Smith, et al., 2009) was further considered to be the most appropriate method for investigating this question.

IPA is accessible, flexible, and applicable (Larkin, et al., 2006) thus making it an attractive choice. The aims of IPA research mean certain methods for collecting and analysing data are preferred but with a level of flexibility as the preferences are in no way prescriptive (Smith, et al., 2009). A broad

approach for planning, collecting data, and analysis was, however, useful to follow throughout the process in guiding all stages (see figure 8).

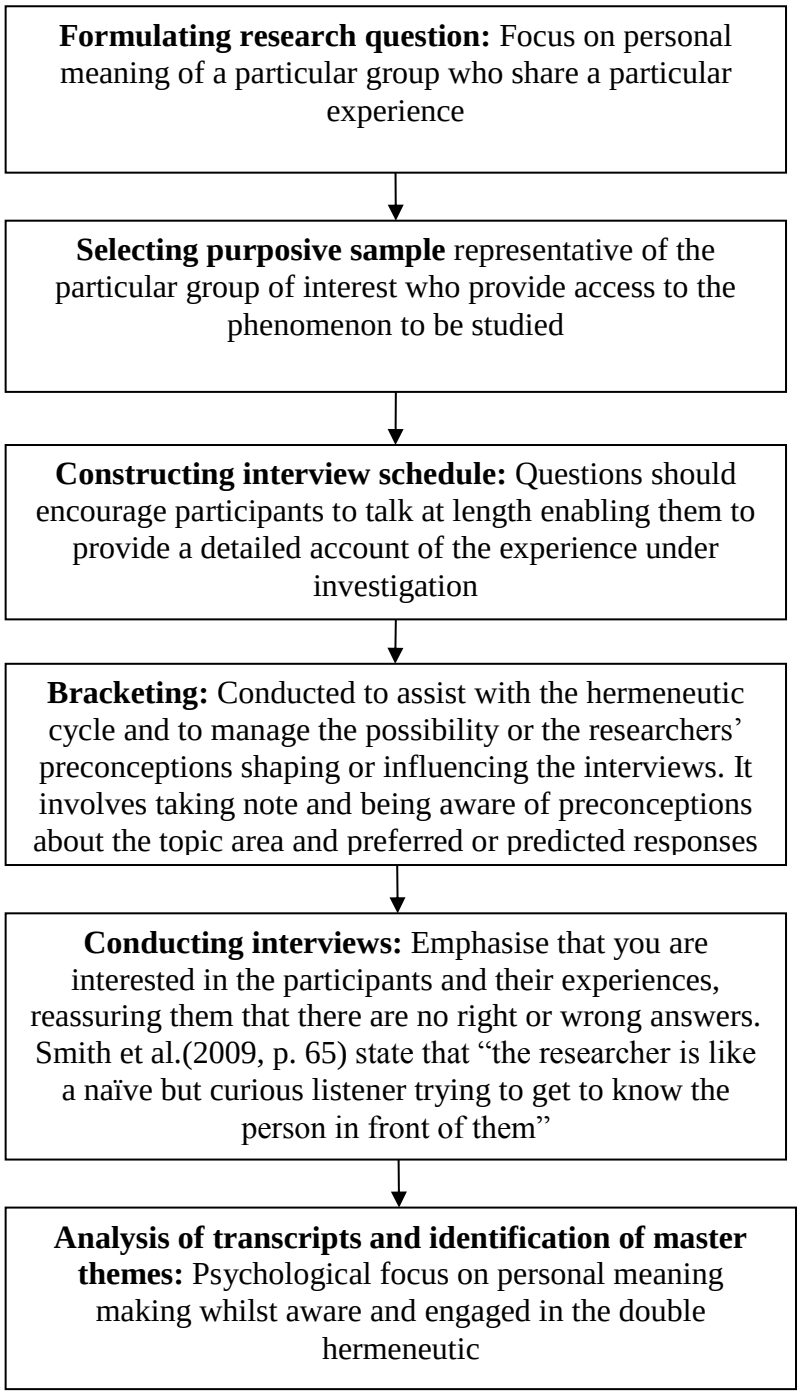

Figure 8 Broad stages of IPA research

Participants

Justification for sample size

The focus on gaining depth of understanding means IPA is idiographic concentrating on specific individuals as they deal with specific situations or events in their lives (Larkin, et al., 2006). This involves highly intensive and detailed analysis of the accounts produced by a comparatively small number of participants. The small sample sizes used in IPA are a contrast to the larger sample sizes preferred in quantitative research. However, the focus of IPA is not to generate results that can be generalised from sample to population, but to gain focused understandings of a particular group of people experiencing a particular situation (Smith, et al., 2009).

Small sample sizes are the norm in IPA (Smith, et al., 2009). Large samples would limit the level of commitment possible to give to each transcript in the analysis process potentially resulting in the loss of depth and subtle inflections of meaning (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest that between three and six participants is appropriate for IPA studies. Purposively selected samples are used so that homogeneity is created. Homogeneity is important so convergence and divergence across and within the individual and group can be examined. A small sample allows deeper analysis at the individual level and the opportunity for more homogeneity across the sample. A purposive sample of six participants was selected for this study.

Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for participants were based on creating a sample that represented the largest homogenous group of the UK Armed Forces and was appropriate for the aims and research question. Since the research investigated marital relationships, it seemed more appropriate to use Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO), rather than junior ranks, as NCOs were more likely to be in a committed relationship. Officers were not used as they are not representative of the largest homogenous group of the UK Armed Forces.

Consequently, the sample included males, aged between 25 and 34 years, who were in the Army, were NCOs, who had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, were in a marital relationship, did not have children, were still serving, and had no recent history of general mental health problems (as assessed with the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) (Goldberg & Williams, 1988) and the National Centre for post-traumatic stress disorder checklist (PCL) (Weathers, et al., 1994). Only those without children were initially preferred as their experiences of the impact of their military career on their children may have become the focus of the interview rather than their relationships with their partners. This criterion was later amended to include those with children (see below, figure 9). Those no longer serving were not included as it was not possible to identify, using the KCMHR cohort data, if they had started their relationship whilst they were still serving or since leaving the military. If their relationship had commenced since they had left service their experiences would differ from those who were in their relationships whilst serving (Wilmoth & London, 2013).

Having no general mental health difficulties was important because the study was interested in how military life and operational deployment affects relationships; mental health symptoms could have acted as confounders to this focus. In addition, people already experiencing possible difficulties due to mental health problems may have found the potentially emotive nature of the interviews challenging.

Participant recruitment

Potential participants were UK Armed Forces personnel who had previously taken part in the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) cohort study; a study based on a representative sample of the UK Armed Forces (Hotopf, et al., 2006; Fear, et al., 2010) (described in detail in Chapter 2, page 58). At the time of completing the KCMHR cohort study questionnaire, the participants were asked if they would be happy to be contacted in the future to take part in other research. Those who consented to be re-contacted and fitted the relevant inclusion criteria were approached for participation in this study.

A two stage sampling method was used to identify and recruit potential participants:

Stage 1: Participants from the KCMHR cohort study who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were identified. This identified 73 potential participants. Of these 73, 42 were subsequently excluded, as 20 had addresses outside of the UK, 6 had left service since questionnaire completion, 8 were Ghurkhas, 1

was Fijian, 1 had died and 6 were over 35 years of age. There were 31 potential participants. Due to the KCMHR cohort data being historical (data for stage 2 of the cohort study was collected between November 2007 and September 2009), the information collected (for example, rank, relationship status, and parental status) may have been out of date as these data may have been collected up to four years prior to the current study. Therefore, stage 2 included clarifying if these 31 participants continued to meet the inclusion criteria.

Stage 2: Recruitment process shown in figure 9:

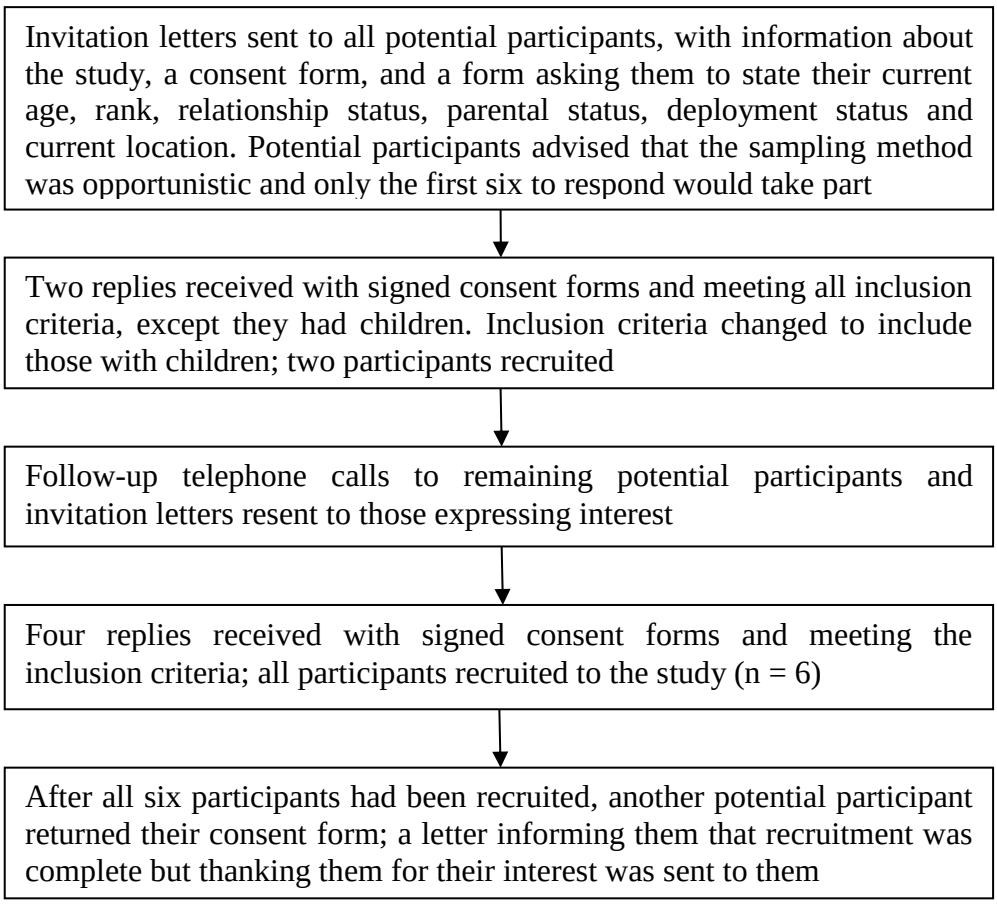

Figure 9 Flow diagram of stage 2 of participant recruitment for the qualitative study

Study sample

Six male British Army personnel of NCO rank, who were married, were still serving, and currently based in England were recruited. The median age of this sample was 29.5 years. Four out of the six participants had one child; one was expecting their first child and one did not have any children. Table 76 presents a short biographical sketch of each participant (using their given pseudonym).

Table 76 Biographical sketch of the six qualitative study participants

Name	Age (in years, at interview completion)	Number of children	Rank	Regiment
Scott	28	1	Corporal	Infantry
Daniel	31	1	Sergeant	Air Corps
Peter	28	1	Sergeant	Infantry training
Terry	28	0	Sergeant	Royal Signals
Neil	31	1	Sergeant	Royal Signals
Jack	31	0 (baby on the way)	Sergeant	Royal Tank Regiment

Materials

A semi-structured interview schedule (appendix 8, page 422) was prepared in accordance with the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009). Open-ended questions were designed to encourage participants to talk openly about their experiences of having and maintaining romantic relationships whilst in the Army. The schedule included probes to assist if participants did not understand a question or if the interview became tangential. The research aimed to understand how Army personnel had experienced the process of starting and maintaining romantic relationships whilst being in the military.

Operational deployment was a large focus of this, as was how they made sense of their experiences within their relationships and any impact their military career had on them. Consequently, there were four broad question areas; 1) Romantic relationships, which included questions about how they met their partner, about their partner, and any specific challenges they experienced in forming, managing and maintaining their relationship; 2) Family and friends; gathered background information of their relationship experiences with family and friends and how they function socially; 3) Effects of deployment, including specific questions about frequency and locations, and their experiences of managing their relationships whilst deployed and any impact deployment separation had on their relationship; and 4) Returning home, focused on how their relationships adjusted post-deployment and how they managed and made sense of separations and reunions.

Procedure

Pilot interviews:

Two pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview schedule. The pilot participants were recruited through a colleague in the KCMHR who was seconded to the KCMHR but a Major in the Army and the manager of a Department of Community Mental Health in the Army. He put me in contact with two Army welfare officers who were willing to take part. Both pilot participants were male, NCOs, one aged 32 and the other 47. Both were informed of the purpose of the interviews and consented to taking part and

the interviews being recorded. They were informed of the confidentiality of the data and that pseudonyms would be used whenever discussing or presenting the data.

Based on the outcome of the interviews the questions appeared to be appropriate, however, both pilot participants tended to discuss issues their wives experienced and avoided talking about their own experiences. This could have been to protect their emotions or they assumed this was what I was interested in. As a result of this, it was decided that at the start of the interviews I would reiterate to each participant that the focus was on their experiences. This is common practice within IPA research since the aim is to uncover personal understandings of experiences (Smith, et al., 2009). In the military context of a culture of regulated emotions (Christian, et al., 2009) this was even more pertinent.

The pilot interviews provided me with experience of interviewing soldiers for the first time. This allowed me to understand and reflect on possible challenges such as, understanding certain acronyms and military related jargon and potential barriers to building rapport with a male military sample. Such barriers to building rapport could potentially have been created through gender differences as a result of being a women researching in a male dominated environment (Horn, 1997) and also due to the potential emotional and psychological hardiness which is engendered as part of training in UK Armed Forces (Adler & Dolan, 2006).

Study Interviews:

Prior to the interviews, I reflected on and noted my preconceptions about the military, soldiers, marriage, operational deployments, and preferred research outcomes. This 'bracketing' process (Smith, et al., 2009) was conducted to assist with my participation in the hermeneutic cycle and to manage the possibility of my preconceptions shaping or influencing the interviews.

The interviews took place at the military base where the participant worked, in their private office, where minimal disturbances would occur and the participants felt comfortable. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. At the start of the interviews, participants were reminded of the purpose of the study and that the researcher was independent of the Army and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). A digital voice recorder was used to record all six interviews.

The semi-structured nature enabled participants to discuss issues they felt were important; consequently, the interview schedule was not prescriptive in sequence or use of the questions. The question's open nature allowed participants to respond with minimum input and I was mindful to not interject with personal opinion. Following all interviews, I made reflective notes of the content and process of the interviews. All interviews were transcribed in line with the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009); the focus of IPA is interpreting the meaning within a participants account, therefore, only the things that will be analysed are recorded including, all spoken words, notable non-verbal utterances such as laughter and sighs,

significant pauses and hesitations. These are typed verbatim into a line numbered document. The exact length of pauses and all non-verbal utterances do not need to be recorded.

Ethical considerations

The KCMHR cohort study received full ethical approval both from the MoD Research Ethics Committee and King's College Hospital Research Ethics Committee (NHS REC reference: 07/Q0703/36). A substantial amendment to the original cohort study ethics application was made to the King's Hospital Research Committee and approved on the 25th May 2011 (Protocol number CSA/07/006; Amendment number 1.1). An amendment to the MoD Ethics was not required, as the NHS ethics amendment was sufficient for approval of this study. However, the MoD ethics committee were informed of the study.

All personal information was kept confidential and data stored without personal identifiers. Participants were informed of their right to refuse participation, to withdraw from the study at any point, and request that their data not be used in the study up until one month after the interview. Both pilot and study participants were reimbursed for their time in the form of a £10 gift voucher.

Although participation in the study was not anticipated to result in any adverse effects, the nature of the questions involved in the interviews did cover potentially emotive and distressing topics. Had the participants

experienced any distress and wished the interview be terminated this would have been facilitated. If the participant became upset, I would have been empathetic, supportive and advised appropriate sign posting to relevant services such as RELATE and offered the opportunity to talk to a consultant psychiatrist with military experience who was working on the larger KCMHR cohort study.

Had the event of disclosure of criminality or other information with serious implications for either the participant or someone else been disclosed, a discussion with my supervisor and the Head of Department would have led to a decision on the best course of action. If participants had reported suicidal ideation, I would have followed standard suicide risk assessment procedures, made contact with the participant's responsible medical officer, and requested a call back from the consultant psychiatrist at KCMHR. As the study's exclusion criterion included being a case on either the GHQ or PCL, it was anticipated that the risk of recruiting any suicidal participants would have been minimal. None of the participants became upset or wished their interview to be terminated.

Analysis

The transcripts were analysed using IPA following the procedures outlined by Smith et al. (2009). The focus of IPA is initially with the individual before moving to group analysis, therefore, each transcript was analysed in turn before moving to looking across the group. At all stages of analysis, I re-examined the transcripts to ensure themes and connections related to the

participant's experiential responses and reflected on the hermeneutic and interpretative processes. I met with my supervisors, to discuss each stage of the process to see if my interpretations were validated by my supervisors' thoughts and interpretations. Themes at all stages were represented by extracts of text from the original transcript. Details of each stage of the analysis process for this study are shown in figure 10.

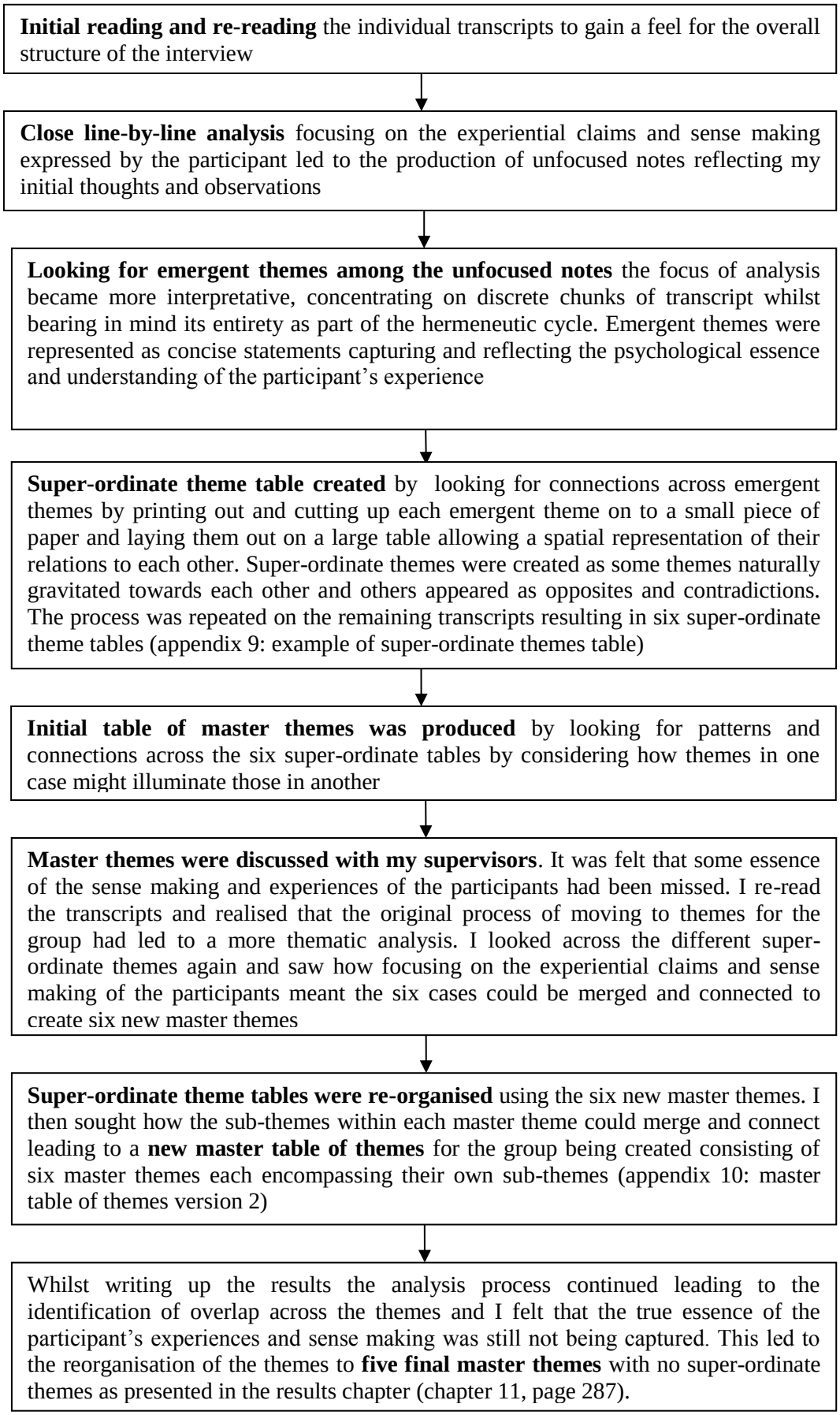

Figure 10 Flow chart of the process of analysis for this study using IPA

Summary

IPA was chosen as the most appropriate qualitative method to address the fifth aim of this thesis: to understand the experiences of UK military personnel in terms of how they manage and maintain their romantic relationships in the context of military life, specifically during times of deployment. In accordance with the IPA approach, participants were chosen, interview schedule created, and interviews conducted, transcribed, and analysed. In the next chapter, the results of this study are presented; a discussion of the results is presented in chapter 12.

CHAPTER 11: QUALITATIVE STUDY RESULTS: MARRIAGE AND THE UK ARMY. INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MALE PERSONNEL'S EXPERIENCES

The fifth aim of this thesis was to conduct a qualitative study to gain experiential data about how military personnel experienced being married whilst serving in the Armed forces. As described in the methods chapter (chapter 10) six interviews with male married Army personnel were conducted and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In this chapter the results from the analysis of the six interviews are presented.

IPA identified five master themes that best represented how the six soldiers made sense of, and experienced their existence as married Army personnel. Each theme represents a different dilemma the soldiers faced and had to manage to find the balance between their life as husband and their life as soldier. This balance was necessary for the co-existing success of their marital relationships and their Army career. The five themes are: balancing Army and wife; separations create weakness and strength; guilt versus alleviating guilt; bravado versus emotion; and transition from lads' life to married life. Each theme, supported by extracts from the interviews (page and line numbers from original transcripts are provided), is presented in turn.

The chapter concludes with a summary briefly discussing the convergence of the five themes. Discussion of the results in reference to existing literature is presented in the following chapter.

Balancing Army and wife

Generally, soldiers experienced a dilemma between their Army life and married life due to competition for time and attention. Managing and negotiating the push and pull between work and family was a challenge faced by the soldiers, but overcome by finding different ways to balance the demands.

The following extracts show how the non-negotiability of work demands, long hours, and need for undivided attention whilst working, create a push and pull between work and their relationships with their wives. These work demands led to the soldiers having to sacrifice time and attention that they would have otherwise invested in their home lives. The distraction of time away from their wives created tensions and difficulties, which is exacerbated by the uniqueness of military life. The demands made on Army personnel are over and above what would be expected and tolerated from a civilian employer:

> **Peter:** "*You wouldn't get a civilian employer saying you've got to work the weekend, you know, at the drop of a hat, where you know, once I've explained to her, if they tell me to do something then I've got to do it and sorry to say but the*

Army does come first then, cos I can't turn round and say no cos then I'll get done and get charged" (Pg17, line 617)

Jack: "*You know the unpredictability, a lot of people don't like dealing with it, like sometimes you might have to at the last minute say that I can't come home cos I've got to do something at work"* (Pg2, line 57)

Daniel: "*It's still the arguments every so often, work too late and all that sort of stuff*" (Pg1, line 35)

Scott: "*I've got a job to do and I'm there to do that job, so it might sound a little selfish but that's where for that period of time my focus is, getting through that tour, and the rest of we'll worry about when I'm home*" (Pg20, line 728)

Scott conveys how during deployment he must be totally committed to his job and not think about home. His comment of "worrying about the rest when he gets home" alludes to the likelihood that this total commitment to work during deployment may cause strain in his home life.

Becoming over involved in the operational deployment, the first time he was deployed, created difficulties for Neil's relationship with his wife. He lost touch with the mundane aspects of everyday life and failed to appreciate or respect the life his wife was still living:

Neil: "*I had taken on the world you know what I mean so everything else was just insignificant so I remember quite*

often just thinking just getting off the phone and thinking oh god how boring is she, even arguing with her, which must have been quite difficult for her at the time. So I'd argue with her… (I) didn't appreciate what was happening outside of my little world and didn't really respect anything" (Pg11, line 387)

Over investment of time or emotions in their Army work appears to cause problems in their marital relationships. The soldiers must, therefore, find the balance to maintain a healthy relationship:

Daniel: *"I think with both it is still work/home balance, think that's the main one, erm, it's quite hard to balance the two, erm just right so you can spend just the right time with family and just the right time with work without letting one slip"* (pg13, line 440)

For Peter, maintaining a balance meant sacrificing his career aspirations. Peter aspired to join the Special Forces but realised that the demand would be too much to find equilibrium between work and wife. He mentions his friend who is divorced joining which suggests that he perceives the Special Forces to be a job not suitable for married men:

Peter: "*I wanted to go in like the special forces and my mate's just gone for it now, we both wanted to do it, but cos*

we was both married it would have made it pretty much impossible to have a good relationship so…it's the time away, you are away a hell of a lot more…he got divorced last summer and now he's joined up and he's loving it" (Pg14, line 524)

For many of these soldiers, having a wife who understands Army life and accepts that there will be times of separation and sudden requirements to work extra hours assisted in finding an equilibrium between work and wife. If wives did not understand these demands, blame would be placed on the soldier for putting work first and relationship difficulties would ensue. Peter and Jack's wives learnt to accept and understand the demands over time; whereas Daniel and Terry's wives' had prior experience of the Army lifestyle:

Peter: "*She used to think that I must have volunteered for it…now she understands, she'll know if I'm working, If I was working tomorrow and couldn't make it home then I'd go out tonight and she'd be happy with that now that she understands…she's learnt more about the Army and understands it a lot more"* (Pg 17, line 649)

Jack: "*My wife is very understanding, and although she'll still get annoyed and that for me cancelling coming home at short notice she knows that it's not just me being awkward but that it's something unavoidable so…in the first couple of*

years there was maybe once or twice where she maybe thought I was being I don't know a bit funny um, but after repeatedly explaining to her she realised" (Pg2, line 62)

Daniel: "*I think it's easier having a military wife er cos she; there's lots of the guys come in saying right okay she's moaning that we are here there and the other and not understanding the amount of work that we've got to put in…the civilian wives they don't understand as much"* (Pg2, line 44)

Terry: "*I think I was fortunate because her father was in the military so she understands that you have to go out on exercise that you have to go away and do stuff so it didn't really bother her in the slightest"* (Pg2, line 37)

Managing the level of immersion in Army life seemed to be used as a mechanism to assist the soldiers in finding the right balance between work and wife. Each soldier's individual experience of the right level of immersion differed suggesting there was no optimum level of involvement. The importance seems to be finding the balance right for them and their wife. Peter balanced Army life and family life by keeping them separate:

Peter: "*When I'm here I'm very military and I'm in the Army but when I'm at home at the weekends I have nothing to do with the Army I don't even tell people I'm in the Army*" (Pg22, line 816)

The separation seemed to help keep work and family balanced. Part of this balance was due to his wife benefitting from being near to family during deployments. Although the Army offers support formally through welfare services and informally through the supportive community, Peter believed his wife needed family support to "get through" deployment separation. Without this she may not cope with deployment separations and their relationship may suffer:

> **Peter:** "*To get her through that (deployment) she needs that family network. The Army's good but it's not your family it's not your close friends"* (Pg5, line 174).

Peter's wife had her own career as she was training to be an Educational psychologist. She therefore did not want to move to where Peter was based, their living arrangement agreement may also have assisted in finding a balance:

> **Peter:** "*cos she's got her own life and career in XXXXXX (location where she lives) and she din't want to move down to XXXXXX (location where he was based)"* (Pg1, line28)

In contrast, Terry was "fully immersed" in military life, his repetition of this statement indicated its significance to him. Although he was "fully immersed" in the Army lifestyle, he felt this didn't compromise his work life balance because his wife had a network of other Army wives and civilian

friends whom she could seek company and support from whilst he was immersed in his Army life:

> **Terry:** "*Yeah fully immersed, yeah fully immersed, umm, she's got a group of friends other wives, she's got a group of friends who are civilian off camp, and we've got a good work life balance*" (Pg6, line 198)

Terry met his wife when he was stationed in Germany. His wife's father was in the Army and their entire family stationed in the same area of Germany as Terry. They met on a night out. Terry's wife had therefore always been used to the Army way of living, which may have helped Terry and his wife find their balance:

> **Terry:** "*Her dad's in the army and I was stationed in Germany and we just met on a night out and it went from there….I think I was fortunate because her father as in the military so she understands"* (Pg1, line 16)

Being too immersed in his Army work, working late and long hours, and taking his work home, for Daniel, had led to problems with his wife. A move in their location away from Army housing and buying their own house, off the Army barracks, helped Daniel create a distance between work and family:

> **Daniel:** "*I used to take too much work home but now I've split it, that's why I've moved the family down, it's a 40 minute drive, is good for you to switch off and then switch back on when coming back in"* (Pg 4, line 111).

Daniel also bought his house to create a stable home life for his wife and son:

> **Daniel:** "*I did do (live on the camp) then I bought a house I got a house down XXXX, um cos we had a child and a bit of stability for him*" (Pg1, line 3)

His physical move from the barracks appeared to symbolise a transition to a space where his family could take priority; the ownership of his home created a permanent base and showed committed to his family. This created more stability (emotional and physical) for his son and wife. The following extract shows that the move away from the barracks was at the sacrifice of his Army social life, thus highlighting that he was putting family before Army:

> **Daniel:** "*There's a lot more social life in the patch (housing area on Army camp), you can always go round your friends there's always something going on at weekends and stuff like that, out in the real world it's a lot different in civvy street*" (Pg5, line 163)

Interestingly, Daniel's wife was previously in the Army, this was how they met. She left the Army when they had their son, thus she had already made her career sacrifice for their family:

> **Daniel:** "*she was, umm, we first met in XXXXXXXX (Army base) she was a medic there and we started talking and went out and got married, er 3 years after that um, she's got out because we had the son, our son, and she's looking after him at the minute until he is old enough to go to school and then she's going to get another job"* (Pg1, line 13)

Scott initially struggled to find the right balance between the Army and family for him and his wife. As a newly married couple, he and his wife moved in to an Army house on the barracks. However, living in an Army house within the barracks lead to them feeling segregated from the civilian world which was exacerbated for his wife when Scott was on operational deployment. Scott's wife was not able to drive consequently separating her from necessary resources such as supermarket shopping for food and social support as the barracks was in an isolated area. This placed a greater strain on their relationship. By moving and living off camp, his wife had better access to her social world and they stopped being segregated from "normality" by their Army existence. Their house continued to be provided by the Army, maintaining some reliance and involvement in Army life:

> **Scott:** "*When we first got married we actually lived behind the wire on the camp…obviously living on the camp it comes with a lot of er, it's er, it's also another segregation from normal life, cos obviously when I'm away you've problems of getting food or getting mail delivered…we are living off camp, so it brings a lot more normality into life where people can come round and visit…yeah it's still military housing*" (Pg2, line 58)

As Scott's interview continued he revealed that he felt some responsibility for his wife's increased feelings of segregation during deployment as he had not orientated her to the support available from the Army welfare services:

> **Scott:** "*Obviously there is a lot of support in the battalion with the welfare officer and especially when we're on deployment the team they have, are always, really good. But, I failed to inform her of any of these and it was all my fault, which we have already discussed to great lengths (laughs), umm yeah I kind of let her down on that"* (Pg 7, line 243).

Scott's wife had moved from her home town in a different area of England to be with Scott and live together on the Army Barracks. Thus during this deployment she had only just relocated, was not working and did not have local family or friends.

> **Peter:** "*I brought her down from XXXXXXX (her home town) and left her in XXXXXXXX (area of the barracks) and disappeared for seven and a half months"* (Pg7, line 242)

Consequently, as well as changing their physical location, before Scott's next deployment to Afghanistan, he made sure he and his wife became more immersed with Army life. This indicates that their involvement with the Army was transient based on particular situations and needs:

> **Scott:** "*Obviously with my wife, after Iraq, and we sort of spotted the problem with me going away and her not knowing anyone, she then before the Afghan tour, made a point of meeting all of the support and welfare teams that are available…so when I deployed um, the welfare team knew her position, knew where she lived and er they had quite a lot of contact with her and quite a lot of support from that side to make sure she had everything she needed"* (Pg10, line 353)

Neil also benefitted from increasing closeness to the Army during deployment separations. During his second deployment, Neil and his wife lived in military housing on a "patch" (the patch is a residential area for married military personnel and their family on or near a military barracks) in Germany, therefore, away from their families. Neil found that having a tight community on the patch, before and during the deployment, enhanced the experience for both him and his wife. Increased closeness with his peers on

the deployment and his wife's engagement in the Army community with other wives on the patch, helped to protect their relationship by offering them both extra support during the deployment:

> **Neil:** "*Because I was married then I was living on the patch… everyone in Germany on a Friday, you'd get home from work and all the wives and partners would be like oh we've organised a barbeque for tomorrow…it was a proper community spirit so and we carried that to Iraq the second time we went, so it made it a lot easier…and it was the world cup…in Germany…so all the wives were sending photos of all their faces painted up…I became closer to some guys there then I probably ever had been…(and) it was still nice to know in your mind that your wife was quite happy back in Germany like"* (Pg12, line 429)

Neil's wife is German, he met her on his first posting in a different area of Germany and they subsequently married and moved to the patch where they lived during this deployment. His wife had therefore moved several miles from her family and friends. Consequently, the increased immersion in Army life on the patch would also have been beneficial for her:

> **Neil:** "*My wife's a German girl, when I past all my training and everything my first posting was in Germany…I met my wife, she's from a town sort of 15 kilometres north of where I was working, and she used to*

come down to town quite a lot…she had loads of friends there….I then got posted un, about 50 miles south, it wasn't really serious at the time…but we had to make a choice…so we did it we rented for a year and then we got married, which gave us a military quarter" (Pg1, line 9)

Jack's wife lives in Scotland, whilst he is based in the south of England living "married unaccompanied" on the Army barracks. The regiment he is in has historically recruited from the North of England and Scotland, consequently there are many soldiers' wives who live near each other in Scotland. Although the wives are not immersed in the Army life, by living on the barracks on a patch, they do come together to help each other during deployments in their local area. Whilst some soldiers are deployed, the wives of the soldiers who are not deployed help to support the wives of those whose husbands are. Their remote involvement in the Army life by taking turns in supporting each other helps the wives manage the deployment separations and in turn protects their relationships:

Jack: "*I've got mates in work that are from close by where I am so their wives and girlfriends…although it's not as big, there are still other people there who understand…so they can help each other out"* (Pg10, line 373)

Jack's wife had been due to move down to where he was and for them to live together in Army housing. There was, however, a long wait and then she

became pregnant so they decided that she would stay where she was as she had good support there:

> **Jack:** "*she did intend to move down here initially after we got married but there was a wait for a house…but she's pregnant at the moment and finding out the baby's due soon…we've decided not to move down…but in the future she'll possibly move down with us"* (Pg1, line 10)

These soldiers conveyed their experiences of how the demands of their Army careers reduced the amount of time and attention they had for their wives. They expressed how this had the potential to result in difficulties with their marriages. The soldiers in this study had, however, found ways to minimise this conflict by negotiating a balance between their Army career and their wife. Having a wife who understood the demands, sacrificing career aspirations, and using the level of immersion in their Army life, often managed by their physical location, were used to find the right balance for each individual soldier. There was no optimum level of immersion consistent across all soldiers; instead each soldier had found the balance that was right for them and their family. One consistent dynamic of this appeared to be ensuring their wife's felt supported.

Separations create weakness and strength

Separation from their wives was a regular feature of these soldiers' lives. The nature of the separations varied but the commonality was the dichotomous

experience of feeling both weakness and renewed strength within their relationship. This dichotomy has been interpreted as a necessary mechanism for the success of their relationship. Soldiers must balance the perceived weakness and instability, by reaffirming the strength and security within their relationship.

Some soldiers lived away from their wives Monday to Friday and only saw them on weekends (living unaccompanied). This created difficulties as the soldiers were not able to see their wives as much as they wanted:

> **Jack:** "*there is no' any bad points aside from not being able to see each other as much as you'd like"* (Pg. 16, line 598)

This may have caused distress and distraction, as they longed to see them:

> **Peter:** "*You're just looking to Friday to go home"* (Pg 2, Line 39)

These weekly separations meant these couples were not able to share their lives in person but instead experienced and managed their relationship through phone conversations that felt forced and artificial:

> **Peter:** "*I find it quite hard cos you know you're not going home that night, I'm just going back to my room and watching TV, and um, don't really talk, well we talk on the phone every night, but we usually run out of things to say and things like that so it gets a bit difficult*" (Pg. 2, line 43)

Separations as a result of deployment appeared to create feelings of insecurity, often resulting from the soldier's fears about the potential for their wives to be unfaithful. Although none of these participants disclosed experiencing this directly, their focus on the existence of potential portrayal and infidelity by wives, suggests they may fear this happening to them:

> **Peter:** "*I know wives that, their husbands have been in Afghanistan and they've been in night clubs chatting up other blokes from different regiments…once the husband is away the wives go out*" (Pg7, line 258)
>
> **Terry:** "*Well there's many a story, many many a story about um the old wives, when um the guys used to be out on operations they used to put a box of HOMO washing powder in the window, Husband Out on Manoeuvres, so the singles would know walking past, knock on the door (makes a whistling noise), off you go*" (Pg18, line 655)

As well as fear of wives being unfaithful, there was also report of a culture of soldier's infidelity. The physical distance caused by the separations from wives or girlfriends may create an environment of opportunity to meet other people as Peter experienced with some of his friends:

> **Peter:** "*I know a lot of lads, I mean 2 of my 3 of my mates have just split up from their wives cos they've not seen them*

and going out and meeting other people and stuff like that so" (Pg4, line 108)

Following lengthy separations (normally post-deployment), re-adjustment to home life with their wives created unstable dynamics in the soldiers' relationships, as they had to re-adapt and re-establish roles and routines. This appeared challenging, as they had to re-negotiate their boundaries and learn to co-exist again. This period of re-negotiating and settling back to living together appeared to create feelings of insecurity and instability:

Terry: "*I think it would be harder when you come back, because you'd be in your own routine, as in I'd be in my routine that I'd got used to and she'd got used to for the last 6 months and then you kind of have to slot back into that and try and get back into routine life and re-build routine"* (Pg6, line 180)

Daniel recalled how time apart, highlighted the differences between him and his wife, the challenge of learning to live together and compromise again. His description of the "back and forth" between having things in the house his way and then his wife's way conveys a sense of a battle of power. There appears to be a need to re-establish pre-existing compromises that were in place prior to the separation. His comment that he "gives in" to his wife, so that the house is how she wants it, suggests that the compromise is about her getting her own way. The seething sound he made at the end of the sentence,

however, was done in jest as shown by his laughter and gives the impression that he wants to convey that he is happy to make this compromise:

> **Daniel:** "*living together again, umm (makes concerned face). So many differences it's unbelievable, just those things you get used to doing your own thing around the house, or she gets used to her way around the flat, and then she wants it back this way and then…and yeah just give in, my wife knows best (makes pretend seething sound and laughs)"* (Pg18, line 639)

Scott recalled how he and his wife "just roll back into it" giving the impression that readjusting isn't a challenge. However, his wife "telling him off" suggests she is struggling to adapt to him being present in the house again.

> **Scott:** "*Obviously I get told off quite a bit for making the house a mess again, but we just roll back into it*" (Pg15, line 554)

Neil struggled to "get his head around" how his wife's life had changed and adapted so she could manage in his absence. His wife seemed to have established a new life without him so that when he returned he was no longer the "be all and end all of her life". Neil expressed how he would have to

"slot back into" her life, suggesting he felt that he would have to adapt and adjust to his wife's way of life:

> **Neil:** *"You kind of got to understand that when you come back that you are not the be all and end all of her life anymore…you want to be and think everything should be dropped for you, but you've got to slot in progressively…it's you fitting back into theirs you know…that's quite hard to get your head around*" (Pg19, line 698)

Jack recalled waking his wife up in the early hours of the morning. His laughter, after stating that she made it "clear she was not interested", suggests this may have caused difficulties for them. Despite the obvious challenge of sleep deprivation, this may also cause problems, at is indicates that Jack is still in the role of soldier and not that of husband:

> **Jack:** "*Just wee daft things like your sleep patterns are a bit funny cos you're used to being woken up at night to do guard and stuff like that but that took only a few days to get over…I woke her up at like half and wanted to talk to my missus and she made it clear she was not interested (laughs)*" (Pg13, line 489)

The soldiers experienced work enforced separations creating weakness in their relationships though the void of shared experience, insecurities in commitment, and challenges re-adjusting to living together following

prolonged separations. On the contrary to experiencing these weaknesses the soldiers experienced renewed strength in their relationships as demonstrated in the extracts below. Separations increased appreciation for their wives as they longed to see them. The soldiers also experienced a sense of achievement for making it through and managing the challenge. Both the appreciation and the sense of achievement created feelings of strength within the relationship:

> **Peter:** "*You know you do miss her a bit more, you still, you think about her a bit more, you want to see her, you can't wait to see her at the end of the tour, it makes you more closer…you're making more effort when you're away on tour*" (Pg13, line 467)
>
> **Terry:** "*Yeah distance makes the heart grow fonder*" (Pg4, line 119)
>
> **Scott:** "*I wouldn't say our relationship suffered…I think things like that sort of make you stronger, so when we, when I come back we were, we were stronger than before"* (Pg8, line 257)
>
> **Neil:** "*the third one (deployment) made our relationship stronger, just cos the fact that I missed them so much"* (Pg15, line 544)
>
> **Jack:** "*It makes you appreciate everything that you've got, obviously you miss the person that you are away from and*

she missed me…ey, it's made the relationship stronger I think" (Pg7, line 246)

There is evidence from some of the soldiers' interviews that their wives were their 'secure base' (Bowlby, 1988). Adult attachment theory states that when a couple have a secure attachment, they become each other's secure base. This secure bond allows exploration of the outside world safe in the knowledge that on return you will be accepted back, nourished physically and emotionally, and be comforted if distressed by the person you have the secure attachment with (Bowlby, 1988). The following extracts demonstrate how some of the soldiers felt secure that their wives would be there for them unconditionally when they needed support:

Scott: "*Moral support, um, when you're out there and things happen it's nice to know that everything is normal here*" (Pg13, line 480)

Daniel: "*The wives are always there, I'm sure Emma would be there if I do, er cos she looked after me after my head wound"* (Pg15, line 526)

Terry: "*I need to talk to someone, I talk to my wife and you know she sat there and listened"* (Pg15, line 563)

Neil: "*I sort of didn't open up, she was obviously really interested…but I didn't really want to open up…I kept everything to myself and to be honest didn't really want to be with other people…and sometimes I grew quite angry*

towards her…I don't know why I acted like that…but I grew out of it. My wife was really understanding um and she gave me a bit of time" (Pg9, line 327)

Bowlby's (1988) theory of attachment proposes that the secure base is attuned to the person's actions and consequently responds to them appropriately. This was reported by Jack and Peter with their wives:

Jack: "*Cos your wife knows when something's not right and she'll keep digging away at you until you tell her, but most of the time it's bit cos you know you can trust your wife if you tell her something er…so it's good to have that there, so if you're having a, and somebody to even notice that something is up with you before you do*" (Pg11, line 412)

Peter: "*Yeah she understands the stress I get, cos like we talk. So if I'm having a stressful time or if I'm under a lot of pressure she knows cos of the, the way I, the way I'll be like quite quiet on the phone and I won't really be listening to her…I'll be concentrating on doing, trying to do something…she'll be like you're not listening are ya…I'll ring you back later, so she does, I think she understands"* (Pg12, line 437)

As well as the emotional and psychological strength, resources such as job security, a home, social enrichments (support, opportunities to travel and

social events/activities), and physical and emotional health care and welfare services, provided by the Army, also enhanced the relationships of some of the participants. It is possible that this functioned as a cost/benefits evaluation; the added security these resources afforded made managing the challenges of separations more bearable:

> **Scott:** "*I don't think I would have been in the position with my financial and um the ability to get somewhere to live, I would probably have still been living with my parents…but joining the infantry you know I've sort of made a career of it…it has massively enhanced my relationship*" (Pg19, line678)
>
> **Terry:** "I*t's a definite support network, um you know we've got one of our friends, he's currently deploying to Afghanistan, she's pregnant she can't drive and everyone's turned around and said if you need to go to the shops knock on the door, anything happens come and give me a knock…any time of day…everyone's like that, you've got your own community spirit…and the welfare department they offer all the help and support they can yeah it's good*" (Pg7, line 214)

Work enforced separations created feelings of weakness in the relationships of these soldiers. On the contrary to the weaknesses the soldiers also indicated their experiences of increased strength in their relationships during

separations. Highlighting the strength in their relationships seemed to be functional as it helps to counteract and balance the feelings of weakness so they had the strength and sense of security to continue the relationship.

Guilt versus alleviating guilt

Guilt surrounding the impact of their Army career on their relationships was experienced by these soldiers. Despite expressing guilt, they appeared to counteract these feelings with methods of alleviating it. Guilt alleviation may function as a coping mechanism which works adaptively to allow them to continue both their career and their relationship. Often the guilt alleviating comments followed admissions of guilt.

Absences and abandonment created guilt due to the soldiers' inability to uphold their responsibilities as husband and meet the emotional needs of their wives. On a day to day basis, this meant missing events and generally not being present in their wife's life. More sombrely, some of these soldiers experienced guilt for the possibility that they may die whilst deployed and the impact this would have on their wife and family:

> **Peter:** "*I mean she had to go to weddings (alone) and her mates were going out the same time to the pictures and she was going on her, cos she had two of her mates with boyfriends and she would be on her own, and she'd be like oh I've had to go out on my own again cos my boyfriend is not here, and it does make you feel bad*" (Pg17, line 632)

Scott: "*I brought her down from XXXXXXX (her home town) and left her in XXXXXX (location of Army barracks) and disappeared for seven and half months"* (Pg7, line 242)

Terry: "*If I had come back in a body bag then it would have been distressing for them (parents), but they didn't rely on me, whereas if I was in a relationship or married or had children then there's other people relying on me"* (Pg5, line 155)

Peter: "*I thought I can't die at Christmas…it's what you leave behind, that's what I'm always worried about, if you die at Christmas every Christmas from now on is going to be tainted with your death, and that's the hardest thing that I had to get my head around, leaving my family especially now we've got the baby, you know if I die at Christmas then that's her Christmas spoilt for the rest of her life pretty much*" (Pg7, line 223)

Absence from their children's lives also created feelings of guilt and upset for not being able to fulfil their role as parent.

Neil: "*Oh look she took her first steps, brilliant, I kind of push it aside, but I do really care about that kind of thing…it is bad that I missed first steps, first words*" (Pg14, line 496)

Peter: *"It got me the other day…my missus took her to the park with one of her mates…she told me and I was like*

started to get upset cos I should be taking her to the park, I should be there, what else am I going to miss, so it is hard" (Pg10, line 363)

Absences during deployment caused guilt for the emotional turmoil they subjected their wife and family too:

Peter: "*You go, I went periods where 2 weeks I didn't ring her cos I couldn't, then she starts panicking and then it makes you feel guilty"* (Pg9, line330)

Soldiers reported their wives' and families' vicarious experiencing of deployment through worst case scenario reports on the news and other media:

Daniel: "*You know what you're doing every day of the week all they're doing is watching the news seeing right so one person is killed, the MOD release that one person is killed, then every family I'm sure looks at the news thinking is it?... there's always that*" (Pg8, line291)

Peter: "*Where like her being home, it was on the news all the time and that was hard for her, she got very upset every time something about the regiment came up she was getting upset…cos she was upset telling me "when I saw someone*

had died on the news I thought it was you straight away", I was like oh god!" (Pg12, line 426)

Terry: "*My parents said that they used to do 6 hour shifts watching teletext on the TV and because they didn't know what was happening and where we were and all that sort of thing"* (Pg15, line 547)

Persistent guilt could lead to either the termination of their career or their relationship. Therefore, it appeared that they alleviated the guilt using various mechanisms. One mechanism, used by the majority of the participants, was to highlight that their wives made an informed choice to take on the Army lifestyle. The participants appeared to be convincing themselves of their wives' informed choice in an effort to relinquish some responsibility for the hardships they subjected their wives to:

Scott: "*She met me coming in to this lifestyle, we were together nine months and within that nine months I spent 2 months in Canada, we got married, three months later I was in Iraq"* (Pg15, line 558)

Peter: *"That's why I wanted to wait a long time to make sure she was happy and knew what she was getting herself into"* (Pg6, line201)

Terry: "*When I was away for 4 months (before they were married), it gave my wife a good look into what might happen if we were to stay together*" (Pg8, line249)

Jack: "*Having went away wee diddly (shortly after) after meeting her she already knew that (deployment separation) existed"* (Pg9, line 329)

Following directly from discussions about the challenges of deployments, wives' personal attributes of strength, independence and ability to cope were emphasised:

Scott: "*Three months after being married I deployed to Iraq for seven and a half months, umm and that period was quite (pause), she's quite a strong women and you know she's done quite a lot in her life before we met so you know it wasn't too much*" (Pg2, line 45)

Neil: *"The second tour was emotionally easy because even though I was married um, my wife's quite independent anyway"* (Pg15, line 525)

Emphasising the support wives received from other sources such as family, friends and welfare services provided by the military, was used to re-assure themselves that they had not totally abandoned their wives as they would receive support from other sources:

Scott: "*I brought her down from XXXX and left her in XXXXXX and disappeared for seven and a half months. Obviously there is a lot of support in the battalion with the*

welfare officers and especially when we're on deployment, the teams they have are always really good" (Pg7, line 242)

Daniel: "*But her mum and family are just round the corner really so; she's from, her family are in XXXXX which is just a 10/15 minute drive really, um so she's got those are, on call sort of thing, to pop around"* (Pg6, line 222)

Controlling how much they told their wives about their deployment experiences assisted to alleviate guilt by managing their wife's anxieties:

Peter: "*If I had to tell her everything that happened…she'd be panicking every time I went cos she'd be more fretting…I play it down a lot so she's not worried when I go away*" (Pg20, line 770)

Terry: "*You'd lie, and that's categorical, you'd lie because you wouldn't want to worry them"* (Pg15, line 539)

Jack: "*You always dress it up a wee bit and say oh nothing we've been doing nothing, it's been quiet and just been doing what we're doing"* (Pg8, line 300)

Minimising any difficulties their wives experienced during deployment separation was another potential method of guilt alleviation. Scott seemed to believe that his wife had minimal responsibilities whilst he was away. His laughter at the end of this statement creates a feeling that he had little empathy for any difficulties his wife may have experienced. The risk of

using this method of guilt alleviation is that it undermines his wife's experiences and emotions which could lead to greater relationship challenges:

> **Scott:** "*We didn't have the young children at that age, she didn't have anything to worry about, she had walking the dog and to sort her new house out whilst I was away, she could buy the curtains that she wanted (laughs)"* (Pg8, line 286)

Bravado versus emotion

Emotional bravado played two roles for these soldiers; managing their own emotions and protecting their wife's. Some of these soldiers struggled to express their true emotions surrounding challenging experiences. Their military career requires them to be strong. Therefore, bravado may be used to enable them to cope with emotionally challenging elements of their jobs. Without using bravado, they may find continuing their military career difficult, if negative emotions become too overwhelming.

Scott's use of a dismissive and sarcastic tone when discussing his feelings towards his wife and the emotional challenge of being deployed and separated from his wife suggests he finds it difficult to directly express his emotions. He appears to use these non-verbal devices to allow him to show his true feelings whilst maintaining a strong façade:

> **Scott:** "*obviously we were very much in love and (said with sarcasm and humour followed by a short laugh)* (Pg1, line 28)
>
> **Scott:** "*Obviously there were times, teary times and miss you times and stuff, but um (said dismissively with sarcasm*)" (Pg8, line 279)

This is similar to Daniel who tries to use humour and dismissive words when initially talking about how he missed his son and wife when he was deployed:

> **Daniel:** "*Like a hole in the head (laughs) no he's fine (laughs)…No I'm sure that I will miss them both…I missed them, I missed them both yeah*" (Pg16, line 563)

Peter felt that he had to remain strong and keep his fears to himself. His bravado with his wife was used to reassure her that he will be okay. In his experience if he did not do this his wife would suffer more emotional hardship as a result:

> **Peter:** "C*os she'll be on the phone to me going oh, this might happen and I've seen this on the news and then I'm feeling the same but trying to be stronger, you know and say oh you know it's all right, nothing's going to happen and stuff like*

that, then I'm putting down the phone and going out on operations and thinking oh god!" (Pg6, line 215)

Peter: "*I always said to the missus, if anything happens the you know you will just have to get on with your life and that, and makes her upset, and then leaving that last day, that going to the airport that , it is bad, cos she's, you're trying to be strong"* (Pg10, line 340)

Neil discussed having difficulties dealing with his emotions and how previously he had kept things to himself as a way of managing his emotions:

Neil: "*I've always found um dealing with things quite difficult cos I've sort of I always keep things to myself"* (Pg10, line349)

In the context of his family life Neil spoke of "playing the big man" to hide his sadness surrounding having missed important events in his daughter's life enabling him to manage his emotions and help protect his wife from being upset:

Neil: "*I kind of play the big man when it comes to "oh look she took her first steps"...I kind of push it aside but I really do care about that kind of thing…like yeah I'm not really bothered…but I'm trying to make her feel better you know*

what I mean, if I like burst in to tears and oh I can't believe I'm missing all this it would make me feel bad it would make her feel worse" (Pg14, line 496)

Transition from lad's life to married life

Five of the six soldiers in this study recalled their experiences as young recruits in the Army and the "lads" lifestyle it brought with it:

Peter: "*You could go out on a Wednesday night and get absolutely hammered and as long as you can stand up in line clean shaved don't matter if you're stinking of alcohol to be honest, as long as you can do your job, that's all they ask for. So the culture of going out is ripe, it's massive, it's all, all your social activities are around alcohol and going out (pause) and getting the most birds you can get to be honest, it's living the lad's life all the time"* (Pg3, line 98)

Neil: "*So normally the first couple of weekends of the month was a bit of a blur cos you'd all just finish work on a Friday as quick as you could and then just go out um…you'd come in at like 8/9 o'clock in the morning, sleep for a few hours and then back out again. So, erm, it was good. I really enjoyed it."* (Pg4, line 140)

Terry: "*Five years of partying that was when I was single it was brilliant, absolutely fantastic"* (Pg17, line 610)

The “lads” lifestyle for these soldiers was about drinking, partying, and meeting women. Relationships during this period did not appear to be taken seriously and the lifestyle did not seem conducive to a committed relationship:

> **Peter:** “*To start off with the relationship weren’t really, well she was, I weren’t very committed to it. I had my own, I had two lives, I had my Army life down London where I was going out pretty much every night then, at weekends I’d go home and see her, come back down and go out*” (Pg3, line73)
>
> **Neil:** “*At first it’s not really taken seriously by others, we didn’t take it seriously to be honest with you, we did our own thing during the week then*” (Pg2, line 51)
>
> **Scott:** “*Being young in the Army it’s sort of comes and goes, so you it’s not the most important thing”* (Pg4, line 118)

Although the five participants had positive memories when reminiscing about the “lad’s life”, all five of them conveyed their experience of having made a decision to make the transition away from the “lad’s life” in order to have a committed relationship. Some of the soldiers made sense of and understood their transition as being a natural progression consistent with their age and having “got it out of their system” activities associated with being a squaddie such as going out drinking and travelling:

Jack: "*It's kind of gradual progression when you meet the right person you just, er, your priorities change a bit and I think with meeting my wife when I was a bit older, I was just coming in to my late twenties got all the travelling and everything and gone out 3 or 4 times a week and that out of my system*" (Pg4, line 127)

Terry: *"There were five of us who lived in a room, so everything we did together…so it was like a relationship then like a bro-mance…and it's just a natural progression isn't it really, when you get to an age when you know you've done all your going out and not going to sleep for four days and just going to different pubs and all that"* (Pg17, line 628)

Four of the soldiers associated their transition to having a committed relationship to not only a progression in age and maturity but also rank. Peter and Neil both experienced an increase in rank being associated with an increase in responsibility and commitment to relationships:

Peter: "*A lot of the lads don't really settle down until, when you start getting to Lance Sergeant and Sergeant that's when you start making a family. By that time most sergeants are married or you know have kids about my stage where, Lance Sergeants they've normally got a steady girlfriend but still going out and being a squaddie at the end of the day. It's not*

until you start getting older and start settling down." (Pg3, line 89)

Neil: "*It's just a natural progression through age, rank, um, especially rank in the military, um, and then with that comes family and that"* (Pg25, line 938)

Scott associated having a committed relationship with being an NCO. The pressures or responsibilities of being an NCO lead to a lifestyle different to that of junior ranks which is more conducive to having a relationship:

Scott: "*I met my wife whilst I was an NCO so things like the Christmas ball and Summer balls are things we have always done…and the things at the corporal's mess are things that I've always done whilst we've been together. You know it would have been slightly different if I'd been a junior rank and hadn't had those sort of pressures and evenings in the mess"* (Pg18, line 662)

Terry also believes that his promotion to corporal created a more stable life for him that enhanced his ability to have a stable relationship:

Terry: "*When I did get into a relationship I'd been promoted to Corporal and I was posted down to the training regiment at XXXXXX which is a non-deployable post so I've had a very stable life since then really"* (Pg5, line 145)

All of the soldiers in this study were of NCO rank and had made the transition to having a committed relationship and, for the majority, a family. However, this transition was difficult for Peter and Neil. Peter reported finding it difficult to leave the lifestyle of the squaddie behind, especially when tempted on a night out:

> **Peter:** "*I was with her for a year and I thought you know I want to settle down now, I settled down, but it's still hard, especially when you go out and that"* (Pg4, line 130)

Neil found it hard not having the same social activities; it seemed that he sometimes missed the closeness of the squadron. He makes reference to his wife's close group of female friends and seems to want the same but feels that since being promoted and having a family this aspect of his life has changed:

> **Neil:** "*If I finished work late on a the Friday, got back to the block and like there was hardly anyone in there, I'd still find somebody to go up town with, you know what I mean, there was always people knocking around. Now it's quite lonely really to be honest with you, and as much as XXXXX (his wife), she's got, there's a group of about 6 to 8 girls over on the patch that sort of hang around together…and have a good laugh like, whereas I'm just sort of, she calls me grumpy, which I am I suppose just because I've kind of not got friends*

that I can just sort of ring up and say fancy going out tonight, do you know what I mean?" (Pg26, line 957)

Although Neil and Peter expressed finding this transition challenging at times, they still continued with it. From the experiences of the soldiers in this study, it intuitively appears that the "lad's" lifestyle is not compatible with or conducive to having a serious committed relationship. Peter explicitly discussed this as he had friends who continued to behave like squaddies but with a detrimental effect on their relationships:

Peter: "*A lot of people go out and get drunk and pick up and cheat on their wives and then they try to cover it up then and then they get caught out eventually, so I don't think it's the job I think that it's more the social aspect that breaks up marriages*" (Pg14, line 506)

Being a squaddie and enjoying the lifestyle that comes with it, appears to be a normal process for junior ranking soldiers. This lifestyle of drinking, late night partying, and being promiscuous with women is not conducive to having a committed relationship. The experiences' of these soldiers indicates that there is a transition that must be made away from the squaddie lifestyle in order to have a serious relationship. Not making this transition may prove problematic.

Summary

Although not represented as an individual theme, it is important to note that all of these participants, at the time of interview, either expressed directly or gave the strong impression that they had a good relationship with their wife:

> **Scott:** *"Yeah yeah, five years later, yeah, I've seen friends of mine who have got married and it's gone the other way but, yeah it's doing quite well"* (Pg2, line 40)
>
> **Daniel:** "*I don't think it's the worse girlfriend or wife I've had!! (Laughs)"* (Pg1, line 34)
>
> **Peter:** "*And sometimes we look smug cos we're always happy and always loving and that"* (Pg8, line 285)
>
> **Terry:** *"It's fine, absolutely fine"* (Pg8, line 246)
>
> **Neil:** "*My own little family, my wife and my daughter, um I just missed them so much"* (Pg14, line 519)
>
> **Jack:** "*There are no bad points aside from not being able to see each other as much as you'd like"* (Pg16, line 598)

These participants were selected from the KCMHR cohort study. Therefore, following the completion of the interviews and the analysis I was able to look at their previous self-reported relationship outcomes. All six participants had reported being satisfied with their relationships, had not discussed divorce or separation with their wives, and did not report relationship or family problems as a result of their most recent deployments. Scott, Daniel, Terry, and Jack reported their military career to have a positive

impact on their relationship, whereas Neil and Peter reported a negative impact of their military career on their relationship. Of note, despite reporting that their military career's negatively impacted on their relationship, they were still satisfied and had a stable relationship, thus highlighting the strength of their relationship (table 77).

Table 77 Overview of qualitative study participants' relationship appraisals

Participant	Relationship satisfaction	Discussed divorce or separation	Perceived impact of military career on relationship	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment
Scott	Satisfied	No	Positive	No
Daniel	Satisfied	No	Positive	No
Peter	Satisfied	No	Negative	No
Terry	Satisfied	No	Positive	No
Neil	Satisfied	No	Negative	No
Jack	Satisfied	No	Positive	No

Although all participants perceive that they have good quality relationships with their wives it is evident from these qualitative results that, to achieve this, they had to negotiate the right balance across the five dilemmas represented in the five master themes. The overall feel from these soldier's experiences is that of a constant push and pull between their Army career and their relationships with their wives. To have both a successful career and marriage whilst in the Army requires the soldiers to negotiate the dilemmas to find equilibrium; imbalance in any of the areas shown in the master

themes could have negative consequences for their career, their marriage, and for their own wellbeing.

CHAPTER 12: QUALITATIVE STUDY DISCUSSION

The qualitative study gained a deep experiential understanding of what it is like for soldiers to have and manage romantic relationships whilst serving in the British Army. Data from six male Army personnel were gathered using semi-structured interviews and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Five themes were generated from the analysis each representing a different dilemma that required balancing in order for them to have both a successful marriage and Army career. The five themes are: balancing Army and wife; separations cause weakness and strength; guilt versus alleviating guilt; bravado versus emotion; and transition from lad to husband. The overall feel was of the soldiers having to manage the push-and-pull between the Army and their wife and marriage.

All the soldiers gave the impression that they were happy with their marital relationship. Since the soldiers were recruited from the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) military health study, used in the quantitative section of this thesis (chapter 2: quantitative method), the soldiers' responses to the relationship outcomes used in the quantitative section were available. Investigation of the quantitative data showed that all of the soldiers in the study had previously reported perceiving their relationships to be satisfied and stable (chapter 11: qualitative results, page 337). These results, therefore, represent experiences of how male heterosexual Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) of the British Army can

successfully manage and maintain their marriages whilst serving in the British Army. Finding the right balance between the "Army and wife" is necessary to achieve this.

Initial analysis of the interviews revealed evidence for the use of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) for interpreting the master theme "separations create weakness and strength". A short explanation of attachment theory was presented in the introduction to this thesis (Chapter 1, page 47).

Each theme is discussed in relation to the current literature and possible theoretical explanations. This is followed by a broader, holistic discussion about the general understanding and implications of these soldier's experiences, reflections of the interview process, strengths and limitations of the study, and conclusions.

Balancing Army and wife

This first theme highlights how the soldiers experience a dilemma between the Army and their married life as they have to balance the demands for time and attention between the two. These experiences are consistent with literature from the general population suggesting that conflict between work and family may exist due to contradictions in needs, time, place, and resources (Goode, 1960; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Wagner & O'Neill, 2012). Literature investigating civilian emergency services workers is also consistent with this finding. Similar to the military, civilian emergency services workers work shift patterns, are exposed to potential danger, and

must work under pressure situations often involving making life determining decisions, all of which have the potential to cause work/family conflict as they distract time and resource away from home life (Regehr, 2005; Roth & Moore, 2009; Wagner & O'Neill, 2012).

In the military, the likelihood of there being competition between work and marriage is arguably increased compared to the general population due to the lack of choice and control over hours of work (Segal, 1986). The soldiers in this qualitative study conveyed their experience of the military being different to civilian jobs due to the unpredictable and non-negotiable requirements to work and how this had the potential to create problems in their marital relationships. As both Javis (2011) and Segal (1986) report, civilian jobs have agreed hours and overtime, whereas in the military, compliance with demands and workload is often not optional or negotiable. This is consistent with longitudinal research indicating that workload is one of the key factors contributing to work/family conflict in military populations (Britt & Dawson, 2005).

Military personnel are paid an ‘X-factor’ which is additional pay to recognise and compensate for the ways in which the demands of a military career differ from a civilian one (Adler & Dolan, 2006). Thus when military personnel sign up, they agree to take on the additional demands of a military career. However, the impact this may have on future relationships may not be considered by military personnel when they “sign up”.

From the interviews, there is evidence that perceiving relationship difficulties as a result of workload may be due to the activation of their wives' attachment system (Vormbrock, 1993). For example, Daniel spoke of how his wife would argue with him when he worked late (chapter 11, page 296). This could be interpreted as evidence of proximity seeking protest behaviour (Pistole, 2010). Separations from the attachment partner when their location is unknown and they are inaccessible, such as when working unplanned over time and long hours, are likely to be perceived as a threat to the attachment system (Pistole, 2010). In these scenarios, separation protest such as creating arguments, being angry, and seeking contact, are likely to be exhibited in an attempt to regain proximity and limit similar situations in the future (Pistole, 2010). Daniel's experience of arguments with his wife is a good example of this (chapter 11, page 296).

Making plans to spend time together at a future date can be a good proximity seeking behaviour helping to deactivate the attachment system, thus limiting the amount of protest behaviours being exhibited (Pistole, 2010). As shown in the experiences of the soldiers in this study (chapter 11, page 295), plans with their wives often are cancelled at the last minute due to unplanned work demands. When plans are broken, the proximity seeking behaviour of making future plans has been ineffective and the attachment system will continue to be activated. This has the potential to create repeated and intensified protest behaviour, thus leading to problems with the relationship (Pistole, 2010).

During deployment, soldiers are expected to give undivided attention to their work. As Scott conveyed in his interview, when he is deployed his focus is "getting through that tour" (chapter 11, page 296). The Army instils a collectivist and loyal attitude in soldiers so that they define themselves as part of a group, prioritising group goals, and having an emotional investment to the group (Hockey, 1986; Christian, et al., 2009); this is necessary as it creates the cohesion required during operational deployments that helps to increase functionality and protect soldiers from adverse health effects (Christian, et al., 2009; Mulligan et al., 2010; Du Preez, Sundin, Wessely, & Fear, 2012; Jones, et al., 2012). Putting the Army first does not appear to be conducive to a healthy marriage. In Scott's experience, although he has a job to do, he alludes to the problems this causes by stating that he has to worry about the impact when he gets home (chapter 11, page 296).

Being too emotionally involved in a deployment and losing respect for the outside world could also lead to difficulties as experienced by Neil (chapter 11, page 298). Gottman, Gottman, and Atkins (2011) suggest that during deployments couples may have divergent realities which lead to communication problems. The use of telephone communication during deployments is one way that soldiers can gain proximity with their partners as a method of maintaining intimacy and closeness during separation. This may, however, as experienced by Neil, be counterintuitive if the couple experience the divergence between their realities, and the wife is made to feel insignificant.

Both Neil and Scott's experiences could be interpreted as being consistent with Britt and Dawson's (2005) findings that increased job significance is a longitudinal predictor of increased work/family conflict in married soldiers. In Britt and Dawson's (2005) study, job significance was a measure of how much military personnel identified and connected with their job. High levels of job significance suggest an over involvement in work. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) propose that time-based conflict is one element of work/family conflict. Time-based conflict may occur when one role produces a pre-occupation that makes it impossible to meet the needs of another role. Being too involved, placing too much significance, and a pre-occupation with work is likely to lead to neglect in other areas of life such as marriage.

In order to maintain good relationships with their wives, the soldiers found ways to balance the competing demands of the Army and married life. This is consistent with research suggesting couples and families find different ways to manage the demands of military life; including support networks, family belief systems and attitudes, communication, and organisational patterns (Desivlya & Gal, 1996; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). One way of achieving a balance between the Army and married life was to sacrifice career aspirations, as Peter experienced in terms of his desire to join the Special Forces. Peter realised that the Special Forces would require a level of commitment, increased work load, and increased job significance, that would take too much time and attention from his wife and be detrimental to their relationship (chapter 11, page 397).

Having a wife who understands military life, the requirements, and the challenges seems to assist in managing the competing demands as discussed by Terry, Daniel, Jack, and Peter. It is reported that well adapted families are likely to understand military structures and have a positive outlook on military life and its purpose (Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Karney and Crown (2011) report that deployments do not increase the likelihood of relationship dissolution if deployment separations are seen as a normative stressor by the military personnel and their partner. Wives who understand, accept, and expect deployments to be part of life are likely to cope better. As Terry stated in his interview, "she understands that you have to go out on exercise, that you have to go away and do stuff, so that didn't really bother her" (chapter 11, page 299).

By understanding the demands, wives may be less likely to blame their husbands for adversities caused and, therefore, avoid having negative thoughts about them and their relationship as indicated by research investigating cognitive styles in relationship partners (McNulty, O'Mara, & Karney, 2008). Research suggests that having benevolent cognitions can help manage negative relationship experiences, thus allowing each partner to maintain a positive view of each other and their relationship, resulting in relationships that are more stable than those where couples blame each other (McNulty, et al., 2008). This is consistent with findings from Desivlya and Gal's (1996) research suggesting six profiles of military families coping; three well-adjusted profiles, and three "unreconciled". Within one of the

"unreconciled" profiles, placing blame is identified as being a key factor leading to relationship problems.

Soldiers controlled the degree to which they were immersed in the Army life as a way to balance work and their marriage and family. For instance, Daniel bought a house away from Army barracks to create distance from the Army and stability for his family. Whereas, Scott remained in military housing to keep connected to the support the military offers, but lived off base to create some separation (chapter 11, page 304). The balance each soldier found was negotiated based on their individual preferences, needs, and experiences. This is support by Sheppard, Malatras, and Isreal (2010) who report that the individual differences of military families lead to ways of managing the strains of military life unique to each family. In this qualitative study, the physical location and type of housing the soldiers chose (private or military/ near barracks or far away) seemed symbolic of their individual approaches to balancing their lives. Despite the differences between the soldiers' individual preferences, being close to their wives' desired sources of support consistently influenced soldiers navigations of how immersed to be.

The amount to which the soldiers immersed themselves and their family and were involved in Army life, as a means of accessing both military and peer support was often a transient process; physical closeness and frequency of use or contact increased during times of deployment separation. This is consistent with Gottman et al. (2011) who suggest that a protective factor for relationships, especially during operational deployment, is for the

spouses left behind to be close to support and embedded in a community, whether that be military or not. Dandeker, Eversden, Birtles, and Wessely (2013) found that the majority of spouses in their study reported going to family and other military wives for support during separations.

Burrell, Durand, and Forado (2003) suggested that integration with the military acted as a buffering effect. They suggest that formal support from the military or informal support through the military community is helpful under stress. Vormbrock (1993) provides theoretical evidence from her attachment theory guided literature review that less separation distress was experienced by spouses who lived nearby or with their family. She proposes that separation distress is reduced by being in contact with an alternative attachment figure. This is further supported by Medway, Davis, Cafferty, Chappell and O'Hearn's (1995) finding that for those spouses who are unable to use secondary attachment figures for support, being involved with support groups may be particularly valuable.

This theme demonstrates how increased workload and job significance have the potential to cause problems in relationships as they create an imbalance in the time and attention available for their wives and their marital relationship. This imbalance is managed partially due to their wives understanding of the Army demands and by them negotiating the amount they are immersed within military life. This theme alludes to work enforced separations being a key cause of increased work load and job significance. The second theme generated from the soldiers' interviews provides more

detail about the process of separation and why this has the potential to cause difficulties in the soldiers' relationships with their wives.

Separations create weakness and strength

Work enforced separations, due to training, operational deployments, and for some living married unaccompanied, meaning the soldier lives separately from his wife during the week, are a frequent feature of Army life. The soldiers in this study conveyed how such separations have the potential to cause weaknesses but concurrently renew strength in their marital relationships. In the context of attachment theory, it does not seem surprising that the soldiers made sense of the separations from their wives in terms of both weakness and strength. This is consistent with a theoretical perspective proposed by Riggs and Riggs (2011) who describe a family attachment network model of military families during deployment and reintegration. Their proposed model demonstrates that whilst deployment separations can lead to the risk of family and relationship difficulties, strength and resilience are also present in most families, which help to manage and maintain relationships during separations.

Living married unaccompanied, has the potential to cause emotional hardship, as the soldier may desire more regular contact with their wife, as was experienced by Jack and Peter (chapter 11, page 305). Regular separations are likely to activate the attachment system as evidenced by Jack and Peter's protest behaviour through complaints of longing to have more contact with their wives. This is supported by Pistole's (2010) theoretical

application of attachment theory to long distance relationships. She reports that although there is no evidence of long distance relationships being less stable than geographically close ones, it is expected that distress may be evident in the form of separation protest, such as a longing for increased proximity.

Moreover, it appeared that regular separation created a void of shared experiences between the soldier and their wife as evidenced by Peter's forced and artificial telephone conversations with his wife. This problematic everyday talk is consistent with reports from Gerstel and Gross (1982) in their review investigating the impact of commuting on civilian marriages. They report that spouses who are separated during the week miss "trivial" talk about everyday topics as they find they are unable to casually discuss and share family matters and their daily experiences. Having a void of shared experience may create feelings of weakness if perceived as a sign the partners are moving apart (Gerstel & Gross, 1982). This could also be perceived as evidence for activation of the attachment system. Their attempt at maintaining proximity through the use of telephone contact did not produce enough shared experience to increase proximity and deactivate the attachment system. This may then have led to potential fear that the attachment relationship was under threat.

Separation due to operational deployments had the potential to cause weakness in some of the soldiers' relationships due to concerns of potential infidelity. This is consistent with reports made by Reger and Moore (2009)

who suggest that thoughts of infidelity are common in both deployed and non-deployed partners, and that whether these concerns are real or imagined is irrelevant; what is pertinent is the emotional distress it causes for both partners. This is also consistent with Gottman, Gottman, and Atkins (2011) who report in their literature review, that trust, betrayal and concerns of infidelity are a main source of distress and relationship problems in the US military.

Karney and Crown (2007) applied social exchange theory to understanding the marital relationships of the US military and suggest that military separations create an opportune environment for infidelity. Social exchange theory proposes that relationships begin and end based on the individuals involved weighing up the perceived rewards and costs. Relationships are formed when both partners perceive the possible outcomes to be better than any alternatives, not just partners but also alternative situations such as being alone and not receiving support (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). They suggest that deployment separations provide access to alternative partners that are usually denied to civilian couples and a situation where they may be more likely to turn to an alternative for support in the absence of support from their existing partner.

Gerstel and Gross' (1982) found that the difference between commuting and non-commuting couples is the ability to "keep an eye on each other" (p.86). Separation due to commuting, is proposed to increase the likelihood of infidelity due to the lack of ability to monitor each other's behaviour (Gerstel

& Gross, 1982). This is quite pertinent for separations caused by operational deployments, as often the amount of contact and sharing of information about the soldier's location and activity are restricted (Hinojosa, et al., 2012).

Consistent with a wealth of evidence (Vormbrock, 1993; Medway, et al., 1995; Bowling & Sherman, 2008; Beder, Coe, & Sommer, 2011), the soldiers in this study reported post-deployment readjustment as another way in which deployment separation led to potential relationship instability and weakness. Daniel, Scott, Neil, and Jack conveyed their experiences of struggling to fit back into home life after deployment (chapter 11, page 302). The need to renegotiate and define roles, routines, and boundaries appeared to lead to difficulties in their relationships. This is supported by the findings from Reger and Moore's (2009) research. Beder, Coe, and Sommer (2011) report that, following several months away, home may no longer be as the soldier left it. The non-deployed spouse who remained at home would have had to establish new routines and roles in the soldiers absence (Beder, et al., 2011).

Problems may arise following a deployment if the returning soldier expects things to return to the status quo (Gambardella, 2008; Reger & Moore, 2009). Evidence for this is seen in Neil's interview as he expresses his expectation that everything should be dropped for him on his return, and the quick realisation that his wife's life had changed whilst he was away (chapter 11, page 312). This is consistent with both Vormbrock (1993) and Bowling and Sherman (2008) who suggest spouses who manage home life

successfully during deployment may inadvertently create a home environment where the returning soldier no longer feels needed or wanted.

Rosen, Durand, Westhuis, and Teitelbaum (1995) studied Army spouses and their marital adjustment following deployments as part of Operation Desert Storm. One key finding was the presence of distancing behaviours in the wives when the soldiers returned home. They interpreted this as the wives' displaying rejecting behaviour as they struggled to accept the returning soldier back into the family. Rosen et al. (1995)'s findings are consistent with Vormbrock (1993) who proposes that wives are ready to defend their new position of independence, which is also consistent with the experiences reported by Daniel, Neil, and Scott in the current study. Jack's experience of waking his wife in the night (chapter 11, page 313) is consistent with evidence suggesting that a further possible cause of reintegration problems is difficulties switching from role of combatant to peacetime service member and family member (Reger & Moore, 2009).

The reintegration experiences of the soldiers in this study can be understood using attachment theory. Rosen et al. (1995) suggested that the wives' reactions of not wanting to relinquish their new found power and independence could be associated with distancing behaviours seen during reunions with primary care givers following separations in infants. Vormbrock (1993), in line with Rosen et al., states that the amount couples detached and created distance during separation will affect how difficult they find reintegration. Vormbrock (1993) reports that spouses who become too

emotionally detached from each other may navigate the separation period well but have more problems reintegrating. High detachment is a threat to the attachment bond and makes it difficult to re-establish a sense of security at reunion. The best reunion outcomes are seen in couples where interdependence is maintained so that the amount of attachment and detachment are balanced. This allows the bond between partners to continue but also have the independence to manage life whilst separated from each other. At reunion, re-establishing security is less challenging as the attachment was not under threat (Vormbrock, 1993).

Despite the soldiers' readjustment challenges, they all gave the impression that they had eventually settled and resumed good relationships with their wives. Beder et al. (2011) conclude from their research with returned Iraq and Afghanistan veterans that most couples may initially have some minor difficulties, but later readjust and reintegrate well.

Attachment theory has been applied to assist in the interpretation of the soldiers' experiences of weakness resulting from separations. To that effect, attachment theory can also be used to understand the strength the soldiers' concurrently experienced. All of the soldiers expressed how separation from their wife had led to increased strength in their relationships. This is consistent with Rosen et al.'s (1995) results that 68% of the Army spouses in their research reported positive relationship experiences following their husbands' deployment. The strength developed and realised during these

separations seems to be the result of appropriate attachment behaviours being activated and used in reaction to the separation.

The participants in this study reported feeling closer to their wives as a result of separation and related this to their feelings of missing their wives. The internal sense of missing someone can be understood as feelings of separation anxiety and overt declarations of missing someone as separation protest behaviour. Separation anxiety and protest behaviours function to activate the attachment system so that proximity to the attachment figure can be re-established and maintained, thus bringing them closer together (Collins & Feeney, 2004). For example, Peter's experience of thinking about his wife and making more effort such as writing letters, and Jack stating how he appreciated his wife more during separation (chapter 11, page 313). These psychological (rather than physical) proximity seeking behaviours enabled the deactivation of the attachment system leading to increased strength and closeness in their relationships with their wives.

In securely attached relationships, the partners become each other's secure base during times when the attachment system is deactivated (Bowlby, 1988). Having a secure base enables securely attached partners to explore the world alone in the knowledge that their partner will still be available on their return. This was evidenced in all of these soldiers' experiences. All of the participants conveyed, in some way, how their wives are always there when they need them (chapter 11, page 315). A secure base is attuned to the attached person's actions and emotions allowing them to respond

appropriately to their needs (Bowlby, 1988). This was evidenced in Jack and Peter's interviews as they disclosed how their wives' always know when something is wrong and always respond in the best way (chapter 11, page 314).

Having a secure base which enables them to explore the outside world enhances the soldiers' ability to do their job during deployments. Moreover, having a secure base allows them to concentrate their attention on the job at hand knowing that they and their partner are secure and safe (Reger & Moore, 2009). Soldiers' wives being their secure base may also have assisted them in managing readjustment post-deployment as they would have achieved an optimum amount of interdependence as proposed by Vormbrock (1993).

A further factor reported to enhance strength in the soldiers' relationships was the material and social gains afforded to them from the Army. Job and financial security, being provided with a house, social support, being part of a supportive community, and health and welfare services, are all available for married Army personnel. As indicated in the soldiers' interviews these resources might help to enhance their relationships and balance the challenges of military life (chapter 11, page 315). This is consistent with Dandeker, Eversden, Birtles and Wessely (2013) who report that most of the soldiers' spouses interviewed considered the long term financial benefits to counterbalance the negative aspects of Army life. Karney and Crown (2007) and Sheppard, Malatras and Israel's (2010) research with US military

members produces similar findings that job security, having a military provided home, and health and welfare services helped balance the negative aspects of military life.

According to attachment theory, the unavailability of the spouse is particularly distressing if separation coincides with other stressors such as financial difficulties (Vormbrock, 1993). The benefits afforded to married Army personnel may, therefore, help minimise any additional separation anxiety during deployment. Furthermore, they may assist the spouse at home in managing home life so they are available as a secure base to the deployed soldier.

It is proposed, based on the evidence from this theme that a protective factor against perceived relationship difficulties for soldiers may be to have a securely attached relationship. This is supported by Riggs and Riggs (2011) who also conclude that families with a secure family attachment network adapt and cope better with deployment separations and are able to provide support for the deployed soldier enabling them to concentrate on their work, further reducing any relationship conflict.

Guilt versus alleviating guilt

Generally, guilt can be functional for relationships, as it shows that the person who feels guilty cares for the welfare of the person they have upset and emotional inequality in the relationship is rebalanced as both partners experience emotional distress (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995).

Continuous and pervasive guilt, however, is likely to lead to the termination of a relationship (Baumeister, et al., 1995). Persistent guilt experiences, therefore, need to be managed for relationship success.

The soldiers reported experiencing feelings of guilt for the impact their Army career had on their wife and their relationship. Baumeister, Stillwell and Heatherton (1995) propose that guilt is the product of neglect, unfilled obligations, and selfish actions towards a close relationship partner. This is consistent with the experiences of the soldiers in this study. Both Peter and Neil's guilt was the product of work enforced absences meaning they had to neglect their wife and children. Not being present for certain events and missing milestones in their child's development meant they felt guilt due to their inability to fulfil their role as husband and father. Causing their wives and families emotional distress also aroused feelings of guilt as they were neglecting their wives' emotional needs and were not able to protect them from emotional hardship. Guilt caused by absences (Logan, 1987; Rohall, et al., 1999; Buckman, et al., 2011) and the inability to fulfil the obligations of being a husband (Greene, et al., 2010) have been reported elsewhere in the military literature.

Baumeister et al. (1995) suggest that guilt can serve to protect and preserve relationships, as it motivates behaviour change to limit the likelihood of the recurrence of guilt or manage the severity of guilty feelings. Due to the nature of Army work, many of the situations, such as job enforced separations, which cause guilt, cannot be changed by the soldiers. Therefore,

rather than changing subsequent behaviour they alleviate guilt by highlighting mitigating circumstances surrounding the situation which serves to displace blame and responsibility. This could be understood as an emotion focused coping strategy that helps to prevent negative emotions from becoming overwhelming (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion focussed strategies include ways to directly or indirectly change the way a stressful experience is perceived, leading to a cognitive reappraisal of the stressor. The soldiers in this study implicitly used this technique in their interviews through reframing their understanding of particular situations, actions or behaviours. Scott and Terry discussed how taking on the Army lifestyle had been an informed choice of their wives' thus reframing the situation to place the responsibility on their wives.

The soldiers in the study drew attention to their wives' attributes such as their strength, independence and ability to cope with deployment separation. Emphasis of the support their wives received from family, friends, and military services was used to diminish responsibility for having left their wives. These mitigating circumstances were used to help reduce their feelings of guilt by displacing the blame and responsibility away from themselves. Guilt alleviation allowed the soldiers to control their guilt experiences so they could continue with both their relationship and their military career.

Evidence suggests that wives who are strong and able to adapt and find ways to cope have better health and relationship outcomes (Busuttil & Busuttil,

2001; Gambardella, 2008). Furthermore, the importance of support from family, friends, and the military to assist wives and families to cope with separation stressors is well documented (Drummet, et al., 2003; Greene, et al., 2010). Karney and Crown (2011) found that deployment separations are not associated with relationship dissolution and may even decrease the likelihood. They attribute this to the idea of deployment separations being a normative stressor military couples expect and accept. Thus, the soldiers' wives "knowing what they were getting in to", not only alleviates the soldiers guilt by displacing the blame, but also normalises deployment separation, decreasing the negative impact on their relationship.

Choosing what to tell their wives about their deployment experiences is used to limit the amount of distress their wife and family feel and in turn the amount the soldier feels guilty. However, evidence suggests this particular method of guilt alleviation could be counterproductive as family members may become frustrated when they know they are being deceived and a lack of information can be a source of stress for those at home (Hinojosa, et al., 2012).

A further method of guilt alleviation was to minimise any challenges their wife may face. This was evidenced by Scott as he conveyed a belief that during his first deployment after he and his wife had married, his wife had nothing to worry about except "walking the dog and choosing curtains for their new home" (chapter 11, page 324). Denial as emotion focused coping is often maladaptive (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem, & Nolen-Hoeksema,

2000). Although it may alleviate the guilt, it will not help to manage the situation by initiating an appropriate response to their wife's distress or altering behaviour to minimise the risk of future distress for their wives by repeating the same action. Consistent with this, Desivlya and Gal (1996) found in their research with 100 Israeli military families, that denial was associated with poor coping of work/family conflict. Interestingly, it was Scott who reported that on his first deployment he had left his wife without orientating her to the support available from the military, thus providing evidence that his denial of the potential hardship she might experience meant he had not attempted to practically manage the situation. On realisation of his wife's struggle to cope during that deployment, as she drew his attention to it, he altered his behaviour on subsequent deployments orientating her to the welfare support and making sure she had access to family and friends (chapter 11, page 321).

In terms of attachment theory, the guilt the soldiers' experienced could be understood as guilt for not fulfilling their role as an attachment figure. Rather than offering comfort and support to their wife, their military careers cause distress and discomfort (Vormbrock, 1993). The mitigating circumstances that the soldiers highlight to alleviate their guilt, such as their wives' being strong and supported, also helps to minimise separation anxiety and keep the attachment bonds strong. Withholding information about their activities whilst deployed could be interpreted to be maladaptive because sharing information about location, wellbeing, and safety would otherwise work as a proximity maintaining behaviour, but withholding this information instead

creates separation anxiety. This is true for denying the challenges their wives face as this would lead to them not responding appropriately to comfort their wives, thus threatening the attachment bond. Using emotion focused coping to reframe existing behaviours and actions as mitigating circumstances helps them to manage the guilt they feel for not fulfilling their role as attachment figure so that they can continue with their relationship and their Army career.

Army workload and separations appear to be a main source of challenges for the marriages of soldiers. The soldiers, however, are able to manage this by balancing their involvement in their Army lives, having a secure attachment with their wives, ensuring their wives are strong and supported, and alleviating any guilt they might feel through emotion focused coping strategies. The practical aspect of Army life such as workload and separations are not the only possible causes of problems. The culture and ethos of Army training and life also have the potential to cause difficulties through imbalance between Army and marriage as seen in the last two themes.

Bravado versus emotion

It is apparent from the soldiers' experiences that bravado was used to manage their emotions and also to protect their wives'. Scott and Daniel had difficulty expressing their feelings as evidenced in their use of humour and sarcasm to discuss their emotions surrounding missing their wife and son, respectively (chapter 11, page 325). The use of humour and sarcasm and other non-verbal mechanisms to manage emotive subjects has a long

standing history in Army culture (Hockey, 1986). Peter described how he had to be strong when his wife voiced concern for his safety. He recalled hiding his own feelings and reassuring his wife that nothing would happen to him (chapter 11, page 326). As well as functioning to protect his wife's emotions, this would have helped him control his own. Similarly, Neil reported how he "played the big man" and did not show his negative emotion surrounding missing milestones in his daughter's development. He states that this is to protect his wife's emotions and "make her feel better" (chapter 11, page 326), but as with Peter this process helps him to control his own emotions.

Christian, Stivers, and Sammons (2009) report that US military training, culture and social hierarchies "explicitly regulate(s) the expression of emotion in many circumstances" (pg. 31). The Army has one goal and that is to protect the country it serves (Hockey, 1986; Hatch et al., 2013). To achieve this goal, the Army as an organisation is overtly masculine. During basic training new soldiers go through a rite of passage with the desirable end result being to have become a man and a soldier (Green, et al., 2010). To this effect the expression of emotion is perceived as a sign of weakness and a threat to one's masculinity. This seems to be concurrent with these soldiers' experiences. The use of humour and sarcasm is not only consistent with Hockey's (1986) reports, it is also in line with Green et al.'s (2010) finding from their qualitative study with 20 soldiers, that some soldiers report not having the ability, or the language, to communicate emotions due to the overly masculine nature of the Army and a fear of being perceived as weak.

Stigma surrounding the expression of emotion in the Army, especially during operational deployments, effects the disclosure of mental health problems and the utilisation of services (Keeling et al., 2012), as well as other emotive topics such as problems with one's relationship or missing one's family as demonstrated in the current study.

Not only do Peter and Neil need to remain strong and masculine to help protect their wives, they also need to manage their emotions so that they do not appear weak in front of their peers. Although they do not report this directly, to be perceived as weak would mean letting the other members of your unit down. The effectiveness of the whole unit is integrally linked to masculine potency, in that all soldiers must remain strong and brave (Hockey, 1986), and the need to "soldier on" (Green, et al., 2010). To this effect it is reported that during deployments soldiers strengthen their ability to suppress feelings of fear and emotion (Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Suppressing and managing emotions assists the soldiers to maintain their masculinity and acceptance in their Army units which enables them to function as effective soldiers (Reger & Moore, 2009). It is, however, suggested that soldiers who suppress their emotions to spare their wives worry and anxiety, risk detaching from their families emotional needs. This could lead to them being less responsive to their families desires for reassurance and comfort (Reger & Moore, 2009; Gottman, et al., 2011). Bowling and Sherman (2008) propose that although emotional numbness may assist soldiers to function with the stress of deployment and manage

their fears, it can have a negative impact on reintegration following operational deployment. Emotionally numb soldiers may have difficulties with their attempts to reconnect on an emotional level with their wives. This is consistent with attachment based theories of understanding the reintegration process (Vormbrock, 1993; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Detachment threatens the attachment relationship and could lead to distancing or other maladaptive behaviours associated with the activation of the attachment system which make post-deployment reintegration more challenging (Vormbrock, 1993).

It, therefore, seems that soldiers need to find the correct balance between managing their emotions so that they are able to remain effective members of their units, whilst not being too detached to risk weakening their relationship with their wives. These soldiers, made sense of and managed this dichotomy through the use of bravado and "playing the big man", humour and sarcasm.

Transition from lad to husband

As discussed in the previous theme, the Army has a strong masculine culture which is necessary for its effective functioning (Christian, et al., 2009). The process of entering the military as a new recruit and becoming a soldier has been described as a rite of passage where the soldier must prove themselves as a man (Hockey, 1986; Green, et al., 2010). Once soldiers prove their "soldierly abilities" and masculinity, they gain more respect and can progress up the ranks. Leisure activities of off-duty male soldiers are often focused around drinking alcohol and pursuing women (Green, et al., 2010). These

masculine experiences were reported by the soldiers in the current study. They expressed how the lad's lifestyle, when they were junior ranking soldiers, had involved going out drinking and "picking up women", and that this did not permit committed relationships. All of the soldiers in this study conveyed how they had made a transition from the lad's life to being a husband.

Transitions from lad to husband were understood by the soldiers in terms of maturity, increased responsibilities, and progression through the ranks. It is suggested that modes of change are often interrelated, that is more than one transition may happen at the same time such as employment change and marital status change (Hatch, et al., 2013). Promotion to NCO requires a cultural and behavioural shift due to increased responsibility and the need for junior ranks to respect them and respond appropriately to their commands. Consequently, heavy drinking sessions and behaving like the junior soldiers would not be consistent with the requirements of their job.

Achieving promotion through the ranks is synonymous with an elevation in social status and respect (Christian, et al., 2009). Arguably, this is the equivalent of being accepted and respected as a man. In this vein, it is proposed that on reaching NCO rank these soldiers have proven their masculinity and been accepted as soldiers. Also, as they would no longer have to engage in sexual promiscuity to prove their manliness they were instead able to have a committed relationship. This is consistent with findings from Green et al. (2010) who report that although portraying "hard

masculinity" in the military is appropriate at certain stages, overplaying masculinity could lead to being disrespected and condemned by both their peers and subordinates.

Despite this clear need to transfer from lad to husband, two of the soldiers reported finding this transition difficult. Attachment theory could be used to interpret this experience. There is evidence to suggest that soldiers' relationships with their peers, when they are junior ranks, are attachment relationships. The military encourages its recruits to know the other people in their unit so well that they can anticipate each other's actions and thoughts (Christian et al. (2009). This level of closeness is like that found in secure attachment relationships when the attachment figure is the secure base (Bowlby, 1988). Furthermore, Hockey (1986) reports that soldiers, when on training or deployments, often discuss previous good times they have shared or make future plans together. This could be interpreted as proximity maintaining behaviours when they are in an environment of potential danger, but also in the wake of inevitable separation upon their return when they are likely to go on leave. Difficulties and distress transferring attachments to their wives from their peers may, therefore, be experienced as they terminate their attachment relationships with their unit. This is evidenced in Terry's experience as he states from "bro-mance to romance" (chapter 11, page 329).

The transition from lad to husband seems necessary for the success of a committed relationship. The lifestyle of junior ranking soldiers is not compatible with married life. To have a successful relationship the soldier

must make this transition. As emphasised by Peter, those who continue to go out drinking and cheating on their wives will have relationship problems (chapter 11, page 331). The social aspect of the 'lads' life is not conducive to married life.

Convergence of themes

Interviews with six soldiers have shown that the experience of serving in the British Army whilst managing a marital relationship can be understood as a series of dilemmas that require balancing. Research from the US indicates that the majority of military marital relationships are resilient to the strains and challenges of military life (Sheppard, et al., 2010; Karney & Crown, 2011). This is consistent with these six soldiers' experiences of happy and stable relationships. Resiliency is described as a dynamic process involving positive adaptation to adversity (Saltzman, et al., 2011). It is proposed that by balancing the dilemmas identified in this study, the soldiers are able to negotiate and establish resiliency in their relationships.

The results from this qualitative study are consistent with existing research showing that workload and an over investment in work, work enforced separations, and the non-negotiable nature of Army work, are the main factors associated with work/family conflict for military personnel, as they distract time and attention away from the spouse (Segal, 1986; Britt & Dawson, 2005; Gottman, et al., 2011; Dandeker, et al., 2013). The current study moves past the identification of the work based factors associated with work/family conflict previously identified in the existing literature, and

highlights the emotional and cultural dilemmas between the Army and marital relationships. This addition to the literature is attributable to the novelty of this study.

Through interviews with the soldiers, focusing on their experiences and how they made sense of their world as married Army personnel, it has been possible to uncover the practical, emotional, and cultural experiences of Army life in terms of the impact on marital relationships. This has not previously been captured by quantitative studies, or studies that have focused on the wives' experiences.

Based on the results from this study, it is proposed that the identified dilemmas of being married whilst serving in the Army can be understand as practical, emotional, and cultural. The practical factors include: increased workload and job significance, job enforced separations, and the non-negotiability of the demands, as identified in the first theme balancing Army and wife. These practical factors create emotional challenges such as experiencing weakness due to concerns of infidelity, difficulties readjusting post-deployment, and experiencing guilt for the hardships military life causes their wives, as identified in the themes separations create weakness and strength, and guilt versus alleviating guilt. Culturally, the soldiers must adhere to certain elements of the Army's overtly masculine and collectivist culture to have a successful career; the challenge is managing this without becoming too detached from their wives (table 78).

Table 78 Summary of themes by practical, emotional, and cultural dilemmas

Practical	Emotional	Cultural
Balancing Army and wife	Separations create strength and weakness	Bravado versus emotion
	Guilt versus alleviating guilt	Transition from lad to husband

The results from this study indicate that the soldiers' manage these dilemmas to create resiliency in their relationships with practical and emotional methods. The presence of both practical and emotional resiliency is consistent with Riggs and Riggs (2011) who propose that resilient wives are able to draw on both external (practical) and internal (emotional) resources and support; it appears that this is also true for the military husband.

The main external (practical) resiliency factors are; having an understanding wife who does not place blame; positively appraising the additional benefits afforded to married couples from the Army; negotiating the right level of immersion in Army life appropriate for the individual and their family; and ensuring their wife has access to their preferred source of support. All of these resiliency factors are consistent with current literature as previously discussed throughout this chapter.

Emotionally, the key resiliency factors are for the soldiers to have a secure attachment with their wives, and to be able to use emotion focused coping to alleviate their guilt. Having a secure attachment enables the soldiers to use effective proximity maintaining behaviours to manage the weaknesses of

Army life, especially separations, may create. It also means the couple are interdependent enabling each partner to function independently whilst maintaining affectionate and supported relationships with their distant spouse. This decreases the likelihood that either partner would become detached and/or would be unfaithful.

Secure attachment bonds help create resiliency against the potential of difficulties during post-deployment reintegration as it decreases the likelihood of either partner becoming too detached during the separation which is known to increase reintegration problems (Vormbrock, 1993). Secure attachments mean that the soldier and their wife are each other's secure base enabling the soldier to explore the threatening environment of their deployment feeling protected by the distal support felt from their wives and the wife to feel distantly supported whilst she manages home life keeping it safe for the soldier's return.

The proposal that secure attachments are a resiliency factor against relationship problems for military personnel is supported by the theoretical papers of Vormbrock (1993) and Riggs and Riggs (2011). These studies draw on attachment theory and the work of Hill (1949) to assist in understanding the reactions of spouses and families to military deployment separations. Consistent with the current study, both propose that secure attachments work because although the spouses may initially experience some distress, they are able to draw on their internal and external resources and available support to find the right balance between dependency and

detachment. Drawing on Hill's (1949) model of "closed" and "open" ranks families, Vormbrock (1993) and Riggs and Riggs (2011) identify evidence of anxious and avoidant attachments in previous literature surrounding spouses reactions to separation and propose why these attachment styles function as risk factors for relationship and family problems.

In anxiously attached military couples, or as Hill (1949) proposes "open ranks" families, the non-deployed spouse may continue to be dependent upon the deployed spouse for support and help with decision making during separations (Vormbrock, 1993; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Riggs and Riggs (2011) relate this to Boss' (1999) theory of ambiguous loss, suggesting problems occur if the spouse keeps their husband psychologically present when they are physically absent. Anxious spouses place too much pressure on the deployed spouse meaning they are unable to focus on their job which may potentially lead to conflict.

Vormbrock's (1993) and Riggs and Riggs' (2011) suggestion of anxious attachments being a risk factor is supported by Medway et al. (1995). In their study, with spouses of National Guard and Reserve soldiers in the US, they found spouses' insecure attachments were associated with increased levels of distress and relationship problems during and following deployment separations. Further support is found in the research of Rosen et al. (1995). They found some of the wives in their study reported being hostile towards their husbands in reaction to being jealous of their husbands "new friends" whilst he was deployed. Rosen et al. (1995) propose that this is similar to

anxious-ambivalent reactions described by Ainsworth et al. (1978) and is indicative of the wives increased dependency upon their husband.

Rosen et al. (1995), therefore, move past the suggestions of Vormbrock (1993) and Riggs and Riggs (2011), who only focus on the spouses' behaviour, and acknowledge the presence of the husbands detachment and the impact this might have on relationships. This is consistent with the current study's finding that the interdependent relationships the soldiers must have with their comrades during deployment are a potential risk factor for marital relationships as they detract attention away from the spouse. It is proposed that having a secure attachment is a protective factor against such difficulties whereas having an anxious attachment seems to increase the risk of relationship problems.

Wives with avoidant attachments, or "closed-ranks" families, as proposed by Hill (1949), are reported to be disengaged, devalue the absent spouses role in the home, and generally become detached and withdrawn (Vormbrock, 1993; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). It is suggested that although this may assist in coping during the deployment, the level of detachment will create difficulties on the soldier's return (Vormbrock, 1993; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). These theoretical propositions are also consistent with Rosen et al. (1995).

It is proposed that from the deployed soldier's perspective, having an avoidant wife would be problematic, as they would be unlikely to function as a secure base for the soldier during deployment. Bowlby (1988) proposes

that secure bases only exist in relationships where there is a secure attachment and the attachment system is deactivated. Avoidant attachment figures are likely to be unresponsive to the attached individual's needs, meaning it is probable that their attachment system will be activated and unable to be a secure base. This provides further evidence for avoidant attachments being a risk factor and secure attachments being a resiliency factor for soldiers and their marital relationships.

Evidence suggests that unstable problematic relationships prior to deployment, increase the likelihood of relationship problems during and following deployment (Rosen, et al., 1995; Orthner & Rose, 2009; Reger & Moore, 2009). This evidence further supports the proposition that securely attached relationships are protective for the marital relationships of male Army personnel. Anxious or avoidant marital attachments would likely have difficulties, regardless of increased stress, due to the nature of their interactions (Levine & Heller, 2011). It is further suggested that in this context deployment can be perceived as a test of the relationship.

Logan (1987) propose that deployment separations present a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the relationship in the absence of the other partner. Consequently, if the relationship is experiencing difficulties prior to the separation, due to an insecure attachment relationship, these difficulties will be exacerbated during the separation and termination of the relationship may ensue. This can also be understood in the context of social exchange theory

as highlighted previously (page 336); access to potential alternatives who do offer support and comfort may be sought in the absence of the other spouse.

Due to the nature of work, especially during deployment separations, there are restrictions placed on what information the soldier can tell their family about their location and their activities (Hinojosa, et al., 2012). Soldiers may also withhold information to protect their wives as shown in the soldiers' interviews in this study. Due to the restrictions on proximity seeking behaviours such as communication, the success of these relationships may depend more heavily on the ability of both spouses to use psychological proximity seeking behaviours such as mental representations (e.g. feeling increased levels of appreciation for their partner in their absence). Having a secure attachment increases the ease at which more abstract proximity seeking, such as mental representations, are affective (Levine & Heller, 2011). Moreover, the general increased level of felt security in securely attached relationships will decrease the frequency and likelihood of the attachment system being activated. Anxious and avoidant attached relationships have an increased likelihood of increased activation of the attachment system. Anxious or avoidant attachments are, therefore, generally at higher risk of having relationships problems, which are arguably increased for married couples when one spouse is in the Army.

Reflexivity

In initial reflective notes made following the interviews and the initial process of reading and re-reading the transcripts at the start of the analysis

process, it was noted that there was a strong sense of the soldiers predominantly using bravado and macho personas when discussing highly emotive topics. The soldiers did appear to be emotionally aware as they freely discussed their wives emotions; only when expressing their own emotions did they appear to use bravado and humour techniques. This is consistent with the theme bravado versus emotion that was later developed through the analysis process. It is proposed that the soldiers' use of bravado is concurrent with their position within an overtly masculine culture, but through this communicative mechanism they still expressed honest representations of their experiences, even if not through direct utterance of their feelings. In fact, for them to have given overtly emotional explanations could be interpreted as being out of character when considering their "lived world".

The effect of the Army's masculine culture is relevant to evaluations of the data based on the role of gender and female researchers in a male dominant environment (Horn, 1997; Carreiras & Alexandre, 2013). Horn (1997) suggests one consideration is how the participants view female researchers and the impact this might have on the access they give to their worlds. Horn (1997) suggests entering the male dominant world as a researcher means, instead of having to prove oneself as capable of fulfilling the job role of the interviewees (in the context of Horn's research, a policewoman, but in the context of mine a female soldier), the female researcher has to prove herself as competent and trustworthy.

One barrier to proving trustworthiness in male dominant and institutionalised environments, such as the Police Force and the military, is the risk of being perceived as a "spy" (Horn, 1997; Carreiras & Alexandre, 2013). In the context of this study I believe that both competency and trustworthiness were achieved through the process of building rapport with the participants. I made contact directly with the soldiers. Therefore, distance was placed between this research and official channels, hopefully diminishing the potential for suspicion from the soldiers. Furthermore, the direct contact used to recruit participants, through letters and telephone calls, meant the process of building rapport had begun before the interview. For all of the interviews it was the participant who granted me access on to the Army base where the interview took place, creating further distance from the organisation. I then drove us both to the location of the soldier's office, which also presented an informal opportunity to build rapport and "break the ice". My driving us could also have assisted in showing some level of competency as driving is often gendered as a male activity.

The data collected from the interviews with the soldiers, although containing the use of bravado to express emotion, contain a vast amount of personal information, detail and experience, about the soldiers' relationships with their wives and other intimate features of their "lived worlds". I, therefore, propose that the content of the interviews indicate that the soldiers perceived me as trustworthy and competent.

Horn (1997) also highlights the potential of female researchers being perceived in the traditional female role. In this sense, they run the risk of being "protected" if the male participants perceive the female researcher to be vulnerable or exploitable. Protection may take the form of sheltering the researcher from the more unpleasant aspects of work, actions or beliefs. In the context of this study this may relate to the soldiers experiences of infidelity in their relationships with their wives. None of the soldiers directly reported either having cheated or fearing that their wives would cheat. Four of the soldiers did mention the existence of cheating in the Army culture. Their discussions of the existence of infidelity were interpreted to be evidence that they may fear this being a feature of their relationships. The lack of direct personal experience of infidelity not being communicated may have reflected their lack of concern or presence of this in their lives, however, it could also be that they did not disclose infidelity as they were protecting me from an unpleasant reality of their lives within the Army. When discussing the "lad's life", disclosures of promiscuous sexual activity were either given in the past tense or the third person, meaning the soldiers gave access to this being part of their Army lives but distanced this from being associated with them. There are a multitude of reasons why this may have been, such as shame, guilt, and protecting me.

Considering the topic of this research, my status as a single young female may have influenced the research process. The absence of a wedding ring could have indicated to the participants that I am unmarried. It is possible that this may have influenced what the soldiers expressed and gave access to

and also how the data were analysed based on my naïve position on marital relationships. Being a young unmarried female may have worked in my favour in terms of access to more personal and honest accounts as I may have appeared unthreatening due to my naivety surrounding marital relationships and how they may or may not be successful.

The inductive and interpretative nature of IPA needs to be acknowledged; how these are managed may affect the interpretations. IPA is inductive and focused on understanding an individual's personal account rather than fitting experience to exiting knowledge (Clarke, 2009). To assist in this inductive process engagement with existing literature was restricted until the main stages of analysis were complete. This aided the attempt to bracket pre-existing beliefs so that the amount my preconceived ideas, expectations, and beliefs interacted with the interview and analysis process was minimal.

IPA's grounding in hermeneutics means it is necessary to recognise and acknowledge which beliefs and interpretations are your own and which are the participants. Bracketing helps this, although totally bracketing out one's preconceptions is not possible. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the possibility of shared beliefs (beliefs that may be shared between researcher and participant). Engagement in the hermeneutic cycle aids in producing an interpretation as close to being a true understanding of the participants' experience as possible. I engaged in the hermeneutic cycle by moving back and forth between the minute detail of the individual interview

to the whole interview, and from the individual interview to the collection of all the interviews, whilst considering my own beliefs.

Initial analysis indicated that the soldiers experienced elements of their relationship with their wife, especially when deployed, in a way that could be understood as their wife playing the role of their "secure base" as proposed by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988). Although the evidence for this existed in the data, the interpretation using attachment theory came from my prior knowledge of this theory. My knowledge of attachment theory was, however, limited and not expanded until the analysis was complete. As the process of interpretation developed and I engaged in the attachment theory literature, it became apparent that attachment theory could be used to understand more of the results. This initial application of attachment theory to the specific part of the analysis later led to the application of this to other themes.

This movement from part to whole can be understood as being part of the process of the double hermeneutic. In the process of applying attachment theory to the whole analysis I went back to the individual transcripts of each participant's interview to reaffirm that there was evidence to support this interpretation. The analysis of these soldier's experiences may have been different had I had more prior existing knowledge of attachment theory; the application of attachment theory to understanding more of the soldiers' experiences, not just the wife as secure base, may have become apparent

earlier in the analysis process, in turn influencing my interpretation of the soldiers' experiences.

It is possible that other psychological theories may have been appropriate for interpreting the soldier's experience, most notably, cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962). Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that when we have certain thoughts which are inconsistent with each other, we will find a variety of ways to try to make them more consistent (Festinger, 1962). The dilemmas experienced by the soldiers could also be understood as dissonance between their understanding and thoughts about the Army and married life. In the context of the research question posited for this research, the evidence for attachment theory serves to be more appropriate. Although IPA is concerned with meaning making and has some association with cognitive psychology, the focus of IPA is how participants make sense of their experiences. The soldier's experience of their wives as their secure base was, therefore, made available in the data, whereas to interpret the dilemmas using cognitive dissonance would have been to read this understanding into the data.

Smith (2011) indicates that an important factor in producing good quality IPA research is the data gathered during interview. The reflection of the data collection process indicates that certain factors such as gender, access, and existing beliefs may have influenced the quality and interpretation of the data. There is also evidence in the content of the data and the reflective process I engaged in that the data and results of the current project could be

deemed to be of good quality. However, it must be acknowledged that barriers to quality of data could still have existed.

Horn (Horn, 1997; 1997) acknowledged a barrier for her accessing data had been that the topic of the research was of limited interest to the participants and it was not obvious how involvement would benefit them. In the context of this research the opposite was true. The topic of this research was of great importance to the soldiers and it was apparent how their involvement may eventually benefit them through increasing understanding. This was particularly pertinent in the context of the previous dearth of research showing interest in soldiers' experiences in relation to this topic. This is consistent with Smith (2004) who proposes that the richness of the data will be enhanced when the topic is important and the participants feel engaged with the project.

Strengths

The qualitative nature of this study, and particularly the use of IPA, led to a deeper understanding of the marital relationships of British Army personnel. This study moves beyond existing theoretical and quantitative literature. Insight has been gained into the emotional factors experienced as part of the dilemmas between Army and wife and an understanding that incorporates personal reflections and sense making of the impact of the Army's culture and ideology.

Whereas the vast majority of previous research has focused on the impact of Army life on marriages from the civilian spouses' perspective, this study focused on the experiences of the male serving military personnel. As far as I am aware, this is the first UK study to solely focus on the serving regular personnel and their experiences of managing and making sense of their romantic relationships and their military careers. Moreover, it seems that this is the first UK study to interview soldiers about their relationships with their wives. IPA is often used to research groups who have thus far been under-researched. IPA was arguably, therefore, the ideal methodology for this study. IPA is committed to exploring and making sense of how a particular group make sense of a particular experience (Larkin, et al., 2006). In this context this study has "given voice" to a previously overlooked group and has provided insight and understanding into the "other side" (the military husband's) of marital relationships in the military.

Limitations

Interpretation of the findings should be considered in the context of the idiographic nature of the study and generalisations made cautiously. This study used a specific purposive sample and, therefore, tells us something about these participants' experiences. At the most this can be generalised to British, married, male, regular, Army personnel, of NCO rank.

It is likely that interviewing soldiers of junior or officer rank would have produced different results based on their contrasting levels of overt masculinity. Hermeneutics is central to IPA (Smith, et al., 2009) and part of

the hermeneutic process involves making an assumption about how a person views the world and their fundamental beliefs (Sandberg, 2005). Variance in the level of overt masculinity displayed by junior and officer ranks is likely to affect how they view the world. Junior ranks are still in a position where they are proving themselves to be masculine soldiers and men. Therefore, the lives of junior ranks are more likely to consist of overt expressions of their masculine status (Hockey, 1986; Green, et al., 2010). Whereas officer ranks will arguably have increased status and respect, meaning their need to frequently reaffirm their masculine status is diminished (Christian, et al., 2009; Green, et al., 2010).

The overt masculinity of the Army may also have affected the quality of the data based on how honest the soldiers might have been. As previously discussed, the masculine ideology of the Army limits the expression of emotion as it is perceived as a sign of weakness (Hockey, 1986; Green, et al., 2010). Consequently, there could have been a risk of the soldiers not being open and honest about their experiences because of a fear of being perceived as weak.

A limitation of quantitative research is the use of cross sectional data. Heidegger proposed that our "being in the world" is always temporal (Smith, et al., 2009). This suggests that there is a temporal limitation to the understanding and conclusions that can be made when using IPA. The interviews are only representative of how these soldiers interpreted their experience of their relationship at that moment in time. It is possible that if

interviewed again their interpretation may have changed. In the context of the military, it is proposed that key factors for a change in belief would be promotion or if they were to leave the military. A further consideration would be to conduct longitudinal research interviewing soldiers at various time points as they move through their military and married life.

Conclusion

Interviews with six male Army personnel indicated that having and managing a marital relationship whilst serving in the British Army is experienced and understood in terms of five dilemmas that need to be balanced. These dilemmas appear to fall into categories of practical, emotional, and cultural conflicts between the Army and marriage. In the context of this research and its applicability to UK, male, Army soldiers of NCO rank, the findings are both consistent with and add to current literature.

It is proposed that the marital relationships of Army personnel may be resilient due to certain practical and emotional factors. Practical resiliency factors include: having an understanding wife, a balanced level of job involvement and significance, positive appraisal of the benefits available from the military for married couples, and ensuring their wives are supported. Emotional resiliency is achieved through the use of emotion focused coping to manage any guilt experienced for the potential negative impact Army life may have on their wife, and having a secure attachment relationship with their wife.

CHAPTER 13: OVERALL DISCUSSION

The main objective of this thesis was to gain a detailed understanding of how military life, in particular deployment, may impact upon the romantic relationships of UK military personnel in the context of the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Five aims addressed this objective, four of which were examined using quantitative methods and the fifth qualitatively. In this chapter, I will briefly reiterate the key results from both the quantitative and qualitative sections and discuss the connections between them. I will then discuss the overall strengths and limitations of this thesis, implications for interventions and policy and recommendations for future research, before drawing some conclusion.

Quantitative summary

The majority of the UK military are married. In comparison to the general population, UK military personnel both marry and divorce younger. Female personnel are more likely to be single and divorced or separated compared to male personnel. Despite the potential for strains associated with a military lifestyle to have a negative impact on relationships, the majority of military personnel who are in a relationship report perceiving them as both stable and satisfied. .

Key factors associated with an increased likelihood of perceiving relationship difficulties are predominantly related to socio-demographic vulnerabilities and home front stressors, not military life or deployment.

Childhood adversity and being in an unmarried relationship are the most pertinent socio-demographic vulnerabilities; while lack of support from spouse and for spouse, and financial difficulties are the most important home front stressors.

It is proposed that deployment separations test the resiliency and resources of relationships, thus for the majority who are able to cope, deployment may be a challenge but does not lead to relationship problems. Relationships which are vulnerable due to pre-existing childhood adversity, limited access to support, and limited financial resources, are at an increased risk of experiencing relationship difficulties. Personnel who deploy for more than 13 months in a three year period and military personnel who experience their work whilst deployed to be above their trade, experience, and ability are also more likely to experience relationship problems due to the additional work stress experienced in these situations leading to increased work/family conflict.

Mental health and alcohol misuse are associated with perceived relationship difficulties; however, mental health and alcohol misuse do not mediate the association between combat exposure and relationship difficulties. Being in a relationship protects against developing mental health and alcohol misuse problems.

Qualitative summary

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of six interviews with UK male Army personnel revealed that they experience the process of managing their marital relationship and their military life as a series of dilemmas which have to be balanced. All of the soldiers in this research gave the impression of positive and stable marital relationships which was congruous with their responses to quantitative relationship outcomes completed as part of the original cohort study. The qualitative results compliment the quantitative results by providing insights in to the resiliency of the relationships of military personnel.

The dilemmas fell in to three broad categories: practical, emotional, and cultural. The practical challenges of Army life are the workload, separations, high job significance, and non-negotiable demands. These practical challenges lead to emotional difficulties such as experiencing weakness and insecurity in their relationships and feelings of guilt for the difficult times their careers create for their wives and families. The collectivist and overtly masculine culture of the Army exacerbate the practical and emotional challenges by creating distance between husband and wife and limiting emotional resources for coping due to the emotional restraint required by Army personnel, especially during operational deployments.

Army personnel manage these dilemmas practically by: having wives' who understand and respect Army life, benefitting from and positively appraising the material gains afforded married personnel from the Army, negotiating the

right level of immersion in Army life, and ensuring that their wife has access to their preferred source of support, especially when the serviceman is deployed. Emotional resilience is achieved by having a secure attachment with their wives. This enables effective proximity seeking (chapter 12, page 351) which leads to increased strength in their relationships. Having secure attachments means the partners become each other's secure base enabling them to function independently and not becoming detached. Using emotion-focused coping, soldiers reframe their understanding of the impact their military careers have on their wives which works to alleviate and manage the associated guilt, further increasing emotional resiliency.

Connections across the quantitative and qualitative results

Both studies provide evidence to show that the majority of UK military personnel perceive their relationships to be resilient to the additional strains of military life. This is consistent with research showing the same for US military personnel (Sheppard, et al., 2010; Karney & Crown, 2011). Saltzman, et al. (2011) state that resiliency is the positive adaptation to adversity. This thesis indicates that the majority of UK military personnel are able to achieve this in terms of managing their relationships in the context of military life.

Taken together, the results from the quantitative and qualitative studies indicate that there are socio-demographic vulnerabilities and military factors associated with the increased likelihood of UK military personnel perceiving difficulties with their romantic relationships. The combined results also show

that home front and emotional resiliency factors can protect relationships from the impact of the socio-demographic vulnerabilities and military factors, leading to resiliency in relationships. The socio-demographic vulnerabilities, military factors, and resiliencies will be discussed in turn drawing together evidence to support them from the qualitative and quantitative studies.

Socio-demographic vulnerabilities

Socio-demographic vulnerabilities are likely to impact on how military personnel perceive, appraise, and cope with the adversities of military life and the impact they have on their relationships (Thoits, 1995). Childhood adversity and being in an unmarried relationship are the most important factors identified contributing to an increased likelihood of perceiving relationship problems among UK military personnel.

Individuals reporting childhood adversity may be more likely to have either anxious or avoidant attachment styles as adults. Attachment styles are formed in childhood in response to the behaviour of the child's primary caregiver. Anxious attachments usually form in children whose caregiver was inconsistently available and avoidant attachments form when the caregiver is unresponsive and rejecting (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Moreover, McCarthy and Taylor (1999) report evidence to support the hypothesis that avoidant attachment style mediates the association between childhood adversity and difficulties in adult relationships. Thus, a further reason for relationship difficulties for individuals who experience childhood adversity

could be because they have an anxious or avoidant attachment rather than a secure attachment, with their relationship partner. In the context of military life and the regular activation of the attachment system due to separations, those with avoidant or anxious attachments may be more likely to experience relationship difficulties.

As discussed previously (chapter 8, page 222), those who are in unmarried relationships do not benefit from the resources afforded to married personnel. Moreover, unmarried relationships are considered to be more unstable as they are less committed and secure (Stanley, et al., 2002). In the qualitative study, all of the soldiers were in married relationships and most discussed the positive impact the benefits and support from the military had on their relationships. In the context of military life married couple's relationships are enhanced and protected by the benefits provided by the military as they decrease the additional external stressors and provide a supportive environment. Unmarried relationships, already thought to be more unstable, do not benefit from the relationship enhancing and protective aids, thus being more prone to experience problems (Karney & Crown, 2007; Anderson, et al., 2011; Karney & Crown, 2011).

Military factors

The qualitative study revealed that having a heavy workload and the non-negotiable demands of the Army were experienced as impacting on the marital relationships of the soldiers. Working late, a lack of control, and unpredictability meant that soldiers would have to miss events, cancel plans,

and not be as present in their home life as much as they would have liked. In the context of the literature surrounding work/family conflict, it is not surprising that work which takes time and attention away from the relationship is likely to be associated with relationship difficulties (Goode, 1960; Britt & Dawson, 2005).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) proposed three forms of work/family conflict; time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behaviour based-conflict. The workload demands of military life, especially when considering the work enforced separations, are likely to create conflict across all three forms. The limited control over work hours and the unpredictability of demands make military life unique from most civilian work (Segal, 1986). It is proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) that work/family conflict is intensified when there are strong negative sanctions for non-compliance with role demands.

It was clear from the qualitative results that the element of military work that had the greatest impact on the soldiers' marital relationships was work enforced separations, particularly operational deployment. Although from the quantitative results having deployed was only associated with discussing divorce or separation, and not any of the other relationship outcomes, certain deployment factors, deploying for more than 13 months in three years and work being above trade, ability, and experience, were consistently associated with four out of the five relationship outcomes.

It is proposed that deployment separations activate the attachment system. Evidence for this is provided from the qualitative study as the soldiers' experienced weakness in their relationships as separation threatened their attachment bonds with their wives. The soldiers in the qualitative study were, however, able to deactivate the attachment system with proximity seeking methods such as appreciating their wives more, making more effort, and writing letters, in turn making them feel closer and increasing the strength in their relationships. Vormbrock (1993) and Riggs and Riggs (2011) support the proposal that the activation of the attachment system is one reason why deployment separations impact on romantic relationships of military personnel.

The combination of the qualitative and quantitative results, provide evidence that deploying for longer may negatively impact on romantic relationships due to the impact it has on the reintegration process post-deployment. Consistent with existing research (Rona, et al., 2007) and the Harmony Guidelines (NAO, 2006) (chapter 8, page 324) the quantitative studies show that deploying for more than 13 months in three years is associated with relationship problems related to deployment separation. The qualitative study revealed that post-deployment readjustment was one cause of difficulties in the relationships of the soldiers' interviewed. In both the quantitative and qualitative discussions it was proposed that being deployed for a longer time increases the likelihood of partners detaching from each other during separation, in turn, making reintegrating more challenging (Vormbrock, 1993).

Perceived weakness in the soldiers' relationships with their wives was demonstrated through a fear that their wives may be unfaithful to them whilst they were deployed. It was suggested that in the context of social exchange theory, deployment separations create an opportune environment for infidelity (Karney & Crown, 2007). Moreover, in the context of attachment theory, spouses may seek out alternatives in the absence of comfort and support from their spouse. It is suggested that the likelihood of infidelity may be exacerbated if deployments are for longer periods of time, leading to a further reason why deploying for more than 13 months in three years may be associated with relationship difficulties (Buckman, et al., 2011).

Work being above trade, experience, and ability was a key deployment factor associated with perceived relationship difficulties. This was attributed to stress spill over in terms of work/family conflict, when stress from one role carries over into the functioning of another role (Voydanoff, 1988; Neff & Karney, 2004). In relation to the qualitative findings, soldiers being over involved and immersed in their work during deployment separations, was raised as being a potential cause of relationship difficulties. Work being above trade, experience and ability may require military personnel to be more immersed in their work. Over involvement in work may cause relationship problems as it creates a time-based work/family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), time-based conflict can be when a role produces a pre-occupation which makes it impossible to meet the demands of another role.

As well as the practical elements of military life, the qualitative study revealed cultural and emotional factors associated with military life that have the potential to cause relationship difficulties. Although there is no evidence from the quantitative studies to support these experiences, acknowledgement of these cultural and emotional insights are important as they add depth to understanding how maintaining good stable relationships might be challenging in the military context.

The overtly masculine culture of the military appears to lead to the need to control and regulate emotions (Christian, et al., 2009). The soldiers in the qualitative study demonstrated how they used bravado as a way to express and manage their emotions. It is reported that those who become overly detached or emotionally numb during deployment risk becoming emotionally detached from their wives (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). This is likely to weaken their relationship and make reintegrating post-deployment more challenging.

The masculine culture of the military also impacts on the way military personnel behave socially (Christian, et al., 2009), as evidenced in the qualitative study with discussions of the lad's life of partying and picking up women. Transitioning from "lad to husband" was indicated as vital for the success of relationships so that soldiers moved away from the promiscuity and prioritising of their social lives to focusing on their wives and families.

The collectivist culture of the military means personnel are trained to define themselves as part of a group, prioritising group goals, and having an emotional investment to the group (Christian, et al., 2009). This collectivism is necessary for optimal unit functioning, especially when on operational deployments as it increases occupational effectiveness of the unit and protects against adverse health effects (Christian, et al., 2009; Du Preez, et al., 2012). Although the collectivist culture is necessary for the effective running of the military, it is not conducive with maintaining marital relationships. This was experienced by soldiers in the qualitative study as they spoke of having to have undivided attention on their work whilst deployed knowing that this would create conflict with their wife when they returned home.

Soldiers in the qualitative study demonstrated how they experienced guilt for the impact their military career had on their wives. They expressed guilt for not being able to fulfil their roles as husband and father, and for the emotional hardship their career placed on their wives. Guilt is the product of neglect, unfilled obligations, and selfish actions towards a close relationship partner (Baumeister, et al., 1995). Pervasive guilt is likely to lead to the termination of a relationship (Baumeister, et al., 1995) or in the context of military life, the termination of the military career, or sacrificing certain elements of it. The soldiers use emotion-focused techniques to alleviate guilt by cognitively reappraising the stressor (chapter 12, page 355) so that they can continue both their romantic relationship and their Army career.

Resiliency

The qualitative study identified practical resiliency factors (having an understanding wife, a balanced level of involvement in Army life and job significance, positive appraisal of the benefits afforded married couples from the military, and ensuring their wives are supported) and emotional resiliency factors (having a secure attachment with their wife). The quantitative studies identified home front stressors which reversed can be understood as home front buffers for resiliency (having a supportive family, wife receiving support from the military and financial stability). Together the qualitative and quantitative studies identify key factors that can enhance the resilience of relationships against the adversities of military life. These resiliency factors can be understood as home front buffers and emotional resiliency.

Home front buffers

Supportive and understanding family:

Not receiving support from spouse whilst deployed was identified in the quantitative study as being associated with perceived relationship difficulties. The importance and protective nature of family support during stressful situations, especially deployment separations is well documented (Neff & Karney, 2004; Baptist, et al., 2011; Hosek & Martorell, 2011). Further to feeling supported during deployment, the qualitative study indicated that having a wife who understood, respected and supported their military career was extremely important for balancing the impact of military life on their relationships. Understanding and supporting military life means

wives are less likely to place blame for hardships on their military spouse, limiting their negative cognitions about their spouse and their relationship, leading to more satisfied and stable relationships (McNulty, et al., 2008; DeLillo, et al., 2009).

Support for non-military spouse:

In the qualitative study, soldiers expressed how their immersion in the military, including their living arrangements, geographical location, and their involvement in military social and support activities, was navigated by the need to be close to their wives preferred source(s) of support. Spouses being supported generally, but especially during deployment separations, has been well documented in the literature as being important for well-being, relationship stability, and satisfaction (Drummet, et al., 2003; Greene, et al., 2010; Gottman, et al., 2011).

The quantitative study indicated that a spouse not receiving support from the military during deployment is associated with perceived relationship difficulties. This is consistent with existing literature (Orthner & Rose, 2009; Karney & Crown, 2011; Dandeker, et al., 2013). In the qualitative study, soldiers emphasised the support their spouses received from military welfare services as a mechanism to alleviate their guilt for leaving them. Thus wives not receiving support not only creates weakness due to the practicality of spouses being unsupported but also due to soldiers' guilt alleviation not being effective.

Spouses' being supported by family, friends, and the military helps build resiliency in their relationships by creating a buffering effect against the additional relationship stressors caused by separations (Burrell, et al., 2003). Wives who are not supported and not coping during separation are unlikely to be available to provide support to their military spouse (Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Financial stability:

The quantitative study shows that financial problems are significantly associated with perceived relationship difficulties. Soldiers in the qualitative study emphasised the financial security gained from their military career as adding strength to their relationships. Deployment may be more manageable for both members of a relationship when additional home front stressors, such as financial problems, are not present. Having fewer concerns at home aids spouses ability to cope, meaning the deployed military personnel does not have to concern themselves with home front affairs allowing them to fully concentrate on their work (Vormbrock, 1993). Military personnel are reported to be proud of spouses who cope well with home front affairs during separation, which in turn leads to better relationship adjustment post-deployment (Coolbaugh & Rosenthal, 1992; Wood, et al., 1995).

Financial stability should, however, be considered in the current climate of financial uncertainty. Financial instability may become more prevalent as spouses find it harder to find work in the context of regular relocations, the cost of living increases, and military job security decreases (Army Families

Federation, 2010; Greentree et al., 2013). The Army Families Federation reported in late 2010 that the number of issues raised by families concerning money was increasing. They attribute this to concerns regarding cuts to military allowances, including overseas living allowances and Continued Education Allowance (CEA) (Army Families Federation, 2010). In 2012 the Army Families Federation, reported that for the first time, they recorded enquiries and concerns from families regarding redundancy and transition to civilian life (Army Families Federation, 2012). Achieving financial resiliency may, therefore, be more challenging in the face of the current changes and financial climate of the UK.

Emotional resiliency

Secure attachment:

Throughout this thesis, attachment theory has been applied to the results as one way of understanding the impact certain aspects of military life have on romantic relationships. The collectivist culture, non-negotiable demands, and regular enforced separations all have the potential to activate the attachment system (Vormbrock, 1993; Pistole, 2010). The activation of the attachment system functions to maintain proximity (physical or psychological) between the partners of an attachment bond. Proximity seeking mechanisms are used to reassure each other that they are still available to each other as secure base and protector even if they are temporarily separated (Collins & Feeney, 2004).

In the qualitative study a key factor contributing to the success of the soldiers' relationships was that they had secure attachments and their wives were their secure base. Wives being the secure base meant the soldiers felt safe to go on their deployment knowing that their wives would be available to support them whilst they were away and still be present on their return. In turn, their wives felt secure and able to cope during the separation finding the appropriate amount of independence without becoming too detached, managing to cope with the additional stressors and using appropriate alternate sources of support (Vormbrock, 1993; Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Riggs and Riggs (2011) theoretical report is consistent with the proposal that having a secure attachment will help protect romantic relationships against the additional strains of military life. They propose that during deployment a secure attachment system will contribute to positive adaptations and coping, however, insecure attachments are likely be a risk factor for poor psychological and relational outcomes. They conclude that attachment processes are a fundamental context for examining risk and resilience in families during deployment.

Individuals with avoidant attachments respond to the activation of the attachment system by detaching as they equate intimacy and dependency with a loss of independence, therefore, they try to minimise closeness (Collins & Feeney, 2004). Anxiously attached individuals are likely to find proximity seeking less effective and tend to be hyper-vigilant for signs of threats to the attachment bond (Levine & Heller, 2011). They are

preoccupied with their relationships and tend to worry about their partners ability to be available and love them back (Collins & Feeney, 2004; Levine & Heller, 2011).

Effective proximity seeking, partner being the secure base, and establishing the optimum level of interdependence are all possible for securely attached individuals, allowing them to navigate the challenges of deployment separation successfully, leading to stronger, more stable relationships. Those who do not have secure attachments are likely to have ineffective proximity seeking behaviours, leading to poor communication and support from and for their spouse. Problems readjusting post-deployment are likely due to a proneness to either over detach or be over dependent during separation. Furthermore, there is an increased likelihood of infidelity as partners turn to alternatives for support, and they are more likely to experience problems managing home front affairs as they struggle to cope emotionally (Vormbrock, 1993; Karney & Crown, 2007; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Thus, a secure attachment protects the relationship in all aspects of potential challenges caused by deployment separation. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that having a secure attachment is protective against developing mental health problems (Currier, et al., 2012) which might in turn lead to difficulties with romantic relationships.

Comparison with emergency services workers

Stressful work environment, shift work and unpredictable overtime, a dangerous working environment and the pressure to make life-determining

decisions have been reported to be challenges of military work, but are also features of emergency services (e.g. police, paramedics, and fire-fighters) work. All of these features have the potential to negatively impact upon the functioning of marital and family relationships (Regehr, 2005; Roth & Moore, 2009; Wagner & O'Neill, 2012; Evans, Pistang, & Billings, 2013). Spouses of emergency services workers frequently report the main sources of stress effecting their relationships to be: feeling like a single parent, changing and renegotiating family roles, sacrificing their own career, unpredictable overtime (in the event that the emergency services worker is attending to an emergency situation that requires working past the scheduled finish time), plans being cancelled, missing family events, and concerns for safety (Regehr, 2005; Roth & Moore, 2009). The methods used to cope by spouses of emergency services workers have similarities with military spouses, including family support (Regehr, 2005), having independent interests, personal strength and the ability to cope, and understanding and respecting the job demands and work (Roth & Moore, 2009).

The findings from the emergency services workers are consistent with findings from military personnel in the current thesis. This suggests that these findings, pertaining to vulnerability and resiliency factors, may be applicable to the relationships of emergency services workers. Although the majority of relationships are resilient and cope with the challenges of military and emergency services work, the additional stressors may test the strength, coping and resiliency of relationships; those with socio-

demographic vulnerabilities or limited home front or emotional resiliency are likely to experience difficulties with their relationships.

Overall strengths of this thesis

The combination of the quantitative and qualitative studies has provided in-depth detail surrounding a topic previously under researched in the UK. The quantitative studies have identified vulnerabilities, and factors increasing the likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties, whereas the qualitative study provides experiential data of how romantic relationships are resilient to the challenges of military life. This mixed methods approach has not only provided depth and detail but is also the first study in the UK to investigate the relationships of the military from the military personnel's perspective using a mixed methods approach. This thesis provides the first UK research to compare military and civilian marital status, include unmarried and married relationships, and to look at military life holistically and not just focus on deployment.

Overall limitations of this thesis

The main limitation to both the quantitative and qualitative studies is the use of cross-sectional data. The implication being that the longitudinal course of relationships in the military context is not examined.

In both the quantitative and qualitative studies, only the serving military personnel's perspective of the relationship was examined. Couples often

perceive relationships differently, therefore, only having one member of the partnership may be misleading (Karney & Crown, 2007). This is emphasised by Dandeker, et al. (2013) who report a discrepancy between husbands' and wives' reports of the wives' ability to cope during deployment separation. A third of the wives reported being concerned about coping with the additional home front demands in their husband's absence, where as 95% of husbands reported being confident in their wives ability to handle key home based responsibilities in their absence.

The qualitative study includes male participants. The quantitative study does include females and some gender differences are shown in the marital status results. But the quantitative studies only include a small number of women. Consequently, generalising these findings to female military personnel should be done with caution.

Although a strength of the quantitative study is the use of five measures to assess relationship difficulties, there is an element of subjectivity in those measures, namely in the relationship satisfaction measure. The question used to measure relationship satisfaction was not from a standardised assessment. What contributes to the perception that a relationship is satisfying for military personnel is therefore ambiguous. An implication for future research is to investigate what military personnel believe contributes to their perceptions of what a satisfied relationship is. This would help clarify what is being measured when asking questions about relationship satisfaction with a military group. The validity of the global relationship functioning measure

should also be considered when interpreting the results. The inclusion of relationship or family problems as a result of deployment poses a threat to the validity of this measure at it includes an evaluation of relationships with family members as well as with romantic relationship partners.

Implications and Recommendations

This thesis has identified military factors that have the potential to create adversities for relationships, personal vulnerabilities that increase the likelihood of experiencing relationship difficulties, and resiliency factors that can aid in the successful management of adversities. The implication of this is that an "at risk" group of UK military personnel can be identified and services and policy be tailored towards their needs. Future research will also assist in understanding their needs.

Interventions and policy

The implications of this research lead to the suggestion of resiliency training. This is consistent with services in the US (Gottman, et al., 2011; Saltzman, et al., 2011). Being in a relationship can be a protective factor against developing mental health problems, however, relationship difficulties are also associated with mental health symptoms (Ross, 1995; Riviere, et al., 2011; Ponder, et al., 2012). Mental health symptoms and problems with romantic relationships can impact on military personnel's well-being and occupational effectiveness and retention in military service (Hoge, et al., 2006). Based on the application of attachment theory to these results, a

theoretical framework for one element of resiliency training could incorporate attachment theory as a framework intending to strengthen and create secure attachment bonds. Adult attachment styles are thought to be flexible and open to change based on the assimilation of new relationship experiences and cognitive schema (Fuller & Fincham, 1995). In this vein, literature proposes that attachment styles can be modified and adjusted to become more secure, though this is more challenging for avoidant styles (Levine & Heller, 2011).

Policy implications from this thesis concern access to military welfare support for unmarried spouses. Research from the general population indicates that the prevalence of co-habiting couples is increasing (Wilson & Stuchbury, 2010). The results from this thesis indicate that UK military personnel in unmarried relationships are at an increased risk of experiencing relationship difficulties compared to married personnel. A possible reason for this difference is that married spouses of military personnel have access to military provided welfare services and are more easily able to be part of a community of military spouses, where they can benefit from peer support (Anderson, et al., 2011). Allowing access to military welfare services, finding ways to promote peer support among unmarried spouses, and recognising unmarried spouses as important in the military personnel's life may assist in limiting the vulnerability of being in an unmarried relationship. This recommendation should be considered in the current economic climate and the downsizing of many sectors of the UK military. Moreover, as discussed in the following section, benefits being made more widely

available should be considered in the context that they may promote the continuation of unhappy relationships. However, this recommendation is only for the provision of support, not the other benefits made available to married personnel.

Future research

The results from this thesis raise the importance of the benefits and compensations afforded military personnel, such as financial and job security, and married military personnel specifically, such as subsidised housing, welfare support, and Continued Education Allowance (CEA), in helping to enhance relationships in the context of limiting additional stressors associated with military life. It has been suggested in US research that these benefits, as well as enhancing relationships, may also accelerate and induce decisions to marry (Karney & Crown, 2007; Hogan & Seifert, 2010; Kelty & Segal, 2013). The results from this thesis show that military personnel do marry younger and those who marry younger also divorce younger, compared to age matched civilians. This indicates that young marriages, potentially induced by the benefits of military life, may be at increased risk of dissolution. ***Thus, the possibility that the benefits afforded married personnel are accelerating relationships that might otherwise have dissolved, to marriage, with an increased likelihood of relationship dissolution, requires further investigation.***

Moreover, the benefits and compensations afforded married military personnel enabling them to have stronger more resourceful relationships may

lead to couples remaining in unsatisfying and unhappy relationships based on the application of social exchange theory (Karney & Crown, 2007). Throughout this thesis, there is evidence for disparity between couples discussing divorce and separation and actual marital dissolution. One reason for this could be attributable to the continuation of unhappy marriages. ***Investigation into the impact of the benefits and compensations and the possibility of the existence of this vulnerable group of couples requires further investigation.***

Research investigating the impact of leaving service and reintegrating into civilian life on the relationships of ex-service personnel has been largely overlooked in the UK literature. This thesis suggests that those who are serving are likely to experience more relationship difficulties compared to those who have left service. As discussed previously (page 268), the cross-sectional nature of the data used in this thesis could mean this conclusion is incorrect. Research from the UK investigating the differences between serving and ex-service personnel in terms of social integration and mental health symptoms indicates that service leavers reported less social participation and more symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Hatch, et al., 2013). This would indicate an increased likelihood of relationship difficulties for ex-service personnel especially in the context of the protective factors of the military infrastructure, benefits and financial compensations no longer being available, that may have previously provided the relationship with resiliency and strength (Hogan & Seifert, 2010). ***The impact of leaving military service***

on the romantic relationships of military personnel and the long term effect of military service on the romantic relationships of ex-serving personnel requires further investigation.

Consistent with previous US research, this thesis indicates that females are more likely to be single or divorced or separated compared to male military personnel. There is currently a lack of research investigating the experiences of female military personnel, their romantic relationships, and the impact of military life. Consequently, ***more research is needed investigating female personnel and their romantic relationships.***

Further research is also required to investigate the experiences of reserve personnel. This thesis indicates that reserves are less likely to be satisfied with their relationship compared to regulars, but due to small numbers stratified analyses were not conducted. Differences between the military experience for regulars and reserves indicates that they are likely to experience managing their relationships in the context of their military service differently due to the differences in their deployment experiences and the additional stress of having to reintegrate to civilian work and life (Browne, et al., 2007; Riviere, et al., 2011). In the context of proposed plans to move to a more reserve-dependent military (Brooke-Holland & Rutherford, 2012), ***closer examination of the vulnerabilities and resiliencies of the relationships of reserve personnel is important.***

Conclusion

This thesis used a mixed methods approach to examine the relationships of UK military personnel. The key results regarding distribution of marital status indicate that military personnel are more likely to marry younger, divorce younger, but divorce less over the age of 30 compared to the general population. The majority of UK military personnel are in a relationship, mainly married relationships. Female personnel are more likely to be divorced, separated, or single compared to male personnel. This highlights at risk groups for relationship difficulties to include females and military personnel under the age of 30 years who are married.

The majority of UK military personnel in a relationship have relationships resilient to the strains and challenges of military life. Military factors most likely to be associated with perceived relationship difficulties are workload, work enforced separations and the non-negotiable demands of military work. Socio-demographic vulnerabilities have been identified that increase the risk of perceiving relationship difficulties: childhood adversity and being in an unmarried relationship. Receiving support from family, spouse being supported, and financial stability are identified as home front buffers increasing resiliency in military romantic relationships. Having a secure attachment with ones' spouse/partner is also identified as increasing resilience in military romantic relationships.

This thesis investigated the relationships of the UK military, the first that uses a mixed methods approach. More research is required to further this

field of study and build on these findings. It is proposed that military life - especially deployment separations - test relationships; those that are strong and resilient succeed but those with socio-demographic vulnerabilities and lacking resiliency are likely to experience relationship difficulties. Of importance is that contrary to "common sense" beliefs, the majority of the UK military do not report perceiving difficulties in their relationship indicating they have relationships resilient to the strains of military life.

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Appendix 1: Distribution of marital status across five response categories by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Table 79 Distribution of marital status across five response categories by socio-demographics

Socio-demographics	Marital status						
	Married % (n)	**Co-habiting % (n)**	**Long term relationship % (n)**	**Single % (n)**	**Separated % (n)**	**Divorced % (n)**	**Widow % (n)**
Total	56.3 (5171)	11.4 (1142)	10.8 (1268)	14.5 (1714)	3.1 (278)	3.7 (345)	0.1 (16)
Mean Age (years) (at time of questionnaire completion)*	38.7 (38.5 – 39.0)	32.2 (31.7 – 32.7)	27.7 (27.4 – 28.1)	28.4 (28.0 – 28.7)	35.7 (34.8 – 36.7)	40.8 (39.9 – 41.9)	44.4 (39.7 – 49.1)
Gender							
Male	58.4% (4777)	11.2(982)	10.2 (1058)	13.4 (1393)	3.0 (241)	6.7 (291)	0.1 (10)
Female	38.2 (394)	13.1 (160)	15.9 (210)	24.5 (321)	3.6 (37)	4.3 (54)	0.4 (6)
Education							
No Qualifications	54.2 (314)	12.2 (75)	11.2 (73)	13.7 (100)	3.9 (23)	4.8 (27)	<0.1 (1)
GCSE/A levels	53.1 (3341)	12.4 (825)	11.8 (936)	15.7 (1228)	3.1 (195)	3.7 (225)	0.1 (9)
Degree or above	65.6 (1249)	8.5 (210)	8.1 (241)	11.7 (350)	2.5 (46)	3.2 (67)	0.02 (6)
Childhood family relationship adversity							
0	58.1 (2293)	11.4 (485)	10.2 (536)	14.3 (739)	2.5 (106)	3.3 (133)	0.2 (11)
1	57.9 (1022)	10.8 (214)	10.2 (233)	14.6 (331)	2.8 (47)	3.4 (59)	0.2 (4)
2+	54.0 (1711)	11.7 (406)	11.4 (442)	14.3 (577)	4.1 (115)	4.5 (141)	-
Childhood antisocial behaviour							
No	57.6 (4347)	11.1 (919)	10.0 (995)	14.4 (1403)	2.8 (213)	3.9 (298)	0.2 (15)
Yes	53.3 (760)	12.7 (207)	13.9 (239)	14.5 (275)	4.6 (60)	2.8 (41)	0.1 (1)
Parental status							
No Children	36.8 (1798)	14.0 (762)	17.4 (1085)	26.3 (1605)	2.1 (100)	3.3 (170)	0.1 (9)
Children	77.0 (3373)	8.6 (380)	3.8 (183)	2.1 (109)	4.1 (178)	4.2 (175)	0.1 (7)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; percentages are weighted; * Mean and 95% confidence intervals

Table 80 Marital status across five response categories by military characteristics

Military characteristics	Marital status						
	Married	**Co-habiting**	**Long term relationship**	**Single**	**Separated**	**Divorced**	**Widow**
Total	56.3 (5171)	11.4 (1142)	10.8 (1268)	14.5 (1714)	3.1 (278)	3.7 (345)	0.1 (16)
Service							
Naval services	56.8 (789)	13.1 (209)	8.0 (157)	16.5 (302)	1.6 (26)	3.9 (46)	0.1 (2)
Army	54.7 (3256)	11.0 (713)	12.1 (906)	15.0 (1149)	3.5 (194)	3.6 (225)	0.1 (9)
RAF	61.2 (1126)	11.1 (220)	9.0 (205)	11.4 (263)	3.1 (58)	3.9 (74)	0.3 (5)
Rank							
Officer	73.8 (1477)	5.8 (149)	6.2 (199)	9.1 (260)	1.9 (44)	3.0 (74)	<0.1 (3)
NCO	60.8 (3168)	11.1 (624)	8.5 (523)	11.2 (709)	3.8 (188)	4.5 (231)	0.2 (12)
Other rank	24.5 (526)	18.1 (369)	22.5 (546)	30.6 (745)	1.9 (46)	2.2 (40)	0.1 (1)
Engagement type							
Regular	57.0 (4373)	11.1 (892)	10.1 (1096)	14.0 (1369)	3.3 (243)	3.6 (257)	<0.1 (6)
Reservist	50.1 (798)	14.1 (250)	9.6 (172)	18.7 (345)	1.7 (35)	4.8 (88)	0.5 (10)
Deployment							
Not deployed	60.4 (2798)	11.7 (592)	8.1 (500)	12.7 (760)	2.6 (125)	4.1 (188)	0.2 (13)
Deployed	51.5 (2373)	11.0 (550)	13.9 (768)	16.6 (954)	3.6 (153)	3.3 (157)	<0.1 (3)
Time deployed in last 3 years							
Less than 13 months	57.8 (4495)	11.1 (951)	10.3 (1037)	13.7 (1394)	3.3 (246)	3.7 (296)	<0.1 (7)
More than 13 months	43.8 (336)	13.6 (115)	16.1 (155)	20.6 (195)	2.0 (18)	3.4 (24)	0.3 (4)
Serving status							
Serving	56.1 (3893)	9.0 (742)	12.3 (1110)	15.8 (1452)	3.2 (218)	3.5 (246)	<0.1 (8)
Left	57.1 (1267)	17.9 (399)	6.5 (157)	11.0 (261)	2.7 (59)	4.5 (99)	0.3 (8)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data: percentages are weighted

Appendix 2: Distribution of relationship satisfaction across five response categories

Table 81 Distribution of relationship satisfaction (5 response categories) by socio-demographic and military characteristics

Demographics	Relationship satisfaction				
	Extremely satisfied % (n)	Satisfied % (n)	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied % (n)	Dissatisfied % (n)	Extremely Dissatisfied % (n)
Total	56.3 (4154)	30.4 (2319)	7.6 (585)	4.5 (341)	1.1 (68)
Socio-demographics					
Mean age (years)	36.31 (36.02 – 36.59)	35.65 (35.28 – 36.02)	35.32 (34.64 – 36.00)	67.13 (36.18 – 38.10)	35.64 (33.55 – 37.74)
Gender					
Male	56.0 (3709)	30.9 (2105)	7.5 (525)	4.4 (302)	1.2 (65)
Female	59.6 (445)	25.9 (214)	8.6 (60)	5.3 (39)	0.6 (3)
Education					
No qualifications	60.5 (257)	26.5 (131)	6.9 (34)	4.7 (22)	1.4 (6)
GCSE's/A-Levels	55.3 (2748)	31.0 (1579)	8.1 (424)	4.3 (214)	1.2 (50)
Degree or higher	57.3 (959)	30.2 (519)	6.4 (109)	5.4 (93)	0.7 (9)
Childhood family relationship adversity*					
0	61.3 (2008)	29.0 (961)	5.4 (184)	3.7 (125)	0.6 (14)
1	55.7 (802)	31.7 (464)	7.7 (116)	3.8 (54)	1.1 (13)
2+	50.2 (1229)	31.9 (843)	10.3 (266)	5.9 (154)	1.7 (37)
Childhood antisocial behaviour *					
No	57.4 (3521)	30.1 (1905)	7.3 (471)	4.3 (266)	0.9 (44)
Yes	50.9 (586)	32.4 (396)	9.2 (110)	5.4 (71)	2.1 (22)
Relationship status*					
Married	58.9 (3017)	28.6 (1467)	7.0 (376)	4.5 (233)	1.0 (46)
Living with partner	53.3 (592)	34.7 (394)	7.4 (90)	3.2 (37)	1.4 (10)
Long term relationship	45.3 (545)	36.0 (458)	11.2 (119)	6.2 (71)	1.3 (12)
Parental Status					
Yes	58.6 (2049)	29.3 (1084)	7.2 (258)	3.9 (142)	1.1 (32)
No	54.5 (2105)	31.4 (1235)	8.0 (327)	5.0 (199)	1.2 (36)
Military characteristics					
Service					
Naval services	58.5 (666)	28.8 (331)	6.4 (74)	5.5 (62)	0.7 (9)
Army	55.8 (2622)	31.0 (1509)	7.9 (389)	4.1 (213)	1.2 (48)
RAF	56.1 (866)	30.3 (479)	7.6 (122)	4.9 (66)	1.2 (11)
Rank*					
Officer	59.1 (1075)	29.3 (531)	5.6 (106)	5.3 (95)	0.8 (11)
NCO	55.9 (2339)	30.4 (1333)	8.1 (354)	4.4 (194)	1.2 (46)
Other rank	54.2 (740)	31.2 (455)	8.6 (125)	3.8 (52)	1.2 (11)
Engagement type*					
Regular	56.7 (3565)	29.9 (1899)	7.4 (477)	4.2 (262)	1.1 (56)
Reserve	50.0 (589)	33.3 (420)	8.7 (108)	6.7 (79)	1.3 (12)
Deployment*					
Not Deployed	57.1 (2162)	29.5 (1184)	7.6 (305)	4.6 (179)	1.1 (33)
Deployed	55.3 (1992)	31.6 (1135)	7.5 (280)	4.3 (162)	1.2 (35)
Time deployed in last 3 years					
Less than 13 months	57.0 (3582)	30.4 (1976)	7.5 (495)	4.4 (291)	1.0 (53)
13 + months	53.6 (320)	31.9 (187)	7.4 (52)	5.2 (26)	1.8 (9)
Serving status*					
Serving	56.4 (3138)	30.2 (1756)	7.1 (419)	4.9 (276)	1.1 (53)
Left	56.0 (1007)	30.6 (560)	8.9 (166)	3.4 (64)	1.1 (15)

NB: Numbers may not add up to the totals due to missing data; percentages and chi-square statistics are weighted; * $p < 0.05$, from chi-square analysis

Appendix 3: Relationship satisfaction mediation analysis data

Table 82 Adjusted† MOR and 95% confidence interval for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with relationship satisfaction; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and alcohol misuse

	Relationship satisfaction							
	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied				Dissatisfied			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With symptoms of PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Socio-demographics								
Childhood family relationship adversity								
0								
1	1.46 (1.10 – 1.94)*	1.41 (1.06 – 1.87)*	1.44 (1.08 – 1.91)*	1.45 (1.09 – 1.93)*	1.19 (0.84 – 1.69)	1.12 (0.78 – 1.60)	1.16 (0.82 – 1.65)	1.17 (0.82 – 1.66)
2+	2.02 (1.60 – 2.56)*	1.82 (1.44 – 2.30)*	1.92 (1.52 – 2.43)*	1.97 (1.55 – 2.49)*	1.89 (1.45 – 2.47)*	1.60 (1.21 – 2.11)*	1.78 (1.36 – 2.34)*	1.76 (1.34 – 2.31)*
Relationship type								
Married								
Co-habiting	1.06 (0.78 – 1.43)	0.99 (0.73 – 1.36)	0.99 (0.73 – 1.36)	1.01 (0.75 – 1.37)	0.93 (0.63 – 1.37)	0.83 (0.56 – 1.24)	0.86 (0.59 – 1.27)	0.82 (0.55 – 1.22)
Long term relationship	1.97 (1.49 – 2.62)*	1.88 (1.41 – 2.49)*	1.86 (1.40 – 2.48)*	1.82 (1.37 – 2.42)*	1.67 (1.18 – 2.36)*	1.50 (1.05 – 2.13)*	1.55 (1.09 – 2.21)*	1.48 (1.05 – 2.09)*
Parental status								
No								
Yes	1.34 (1.08 – 1.67)*	1.31 (1.05 – 1.64)*	1.30 (1.05 – 1.62)*	1.32 (1.06 – 1.65)*	1.43 (1.08 – 1.89)*	1.37 (1.03 – 1.82)*	1.38 (1.05 – 1.83)*	1.41 (1.06 – 1.86)*
Military characteristics								
Engagement Type								
Regular								
Reserve	1.17 (0.89 – 1.53)	1.23 (0.93 – 1.62)	1.22 (0.93 – 1.61)	1.20 (0.91 – 1.59)	1.71 (1.27 – 2.31)*	1.85 (1.35 – 2.52)*	1.78 (1.32 – 2.40)*	1.82 (1.35 – 2.46)*
Serving status								
Serving								
Left	1.37 (1.09 – 1.72)*	1.31 (1.04 – 1.64)*	1.26 (1.01 – 1.58)*	1.35 (1.07 – 1.69)*	0.78 (0.57 – 1.05)	0.73 (0.53 – 0.99)	0.73 (0.54 – 0.99)	0.76 (0.56 – 1.04)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for all analyses; MORs are weighted:*$p < 0.05$; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Table 83 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for the associations between deployment-related experiences and relationship satisfaction; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

	Relationship Satisfaction							
Deployment experiences	**Neither satisfied or dissatisfied**				**Dissatisfied**			
	Original model	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**	**Original model**	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**
Support for personal problems from unit								
Agree								
Neither	1.14 (0.79 – 1.65)	1.01 (0.75 – 1.61)	1.14 (0.78 – 1.65)	1.15 (0.79 – 1.67)	0.91 (0.57 – 1.46)	0.85 (0.52 – 1.40)	0.92 (0.57 – 1.47)	0.89 (0.55 – 1.44)
Disagree	0.98 (0.64 – 1.49)	0.89 (0.58 – 1.37)	0.94 (0.62 – 1.43)	0.96 (0.63 – 1.45)	1.88 (1.21 – 2.91)*	1.47 (0.93 – 2.31)	1.84 (1.18 – 2.88)*	1.80 (1.16 – 2.78)*
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed								
Disagree								
Agree	1.65 (1.08 – 2.52)*	1.52 (1.00 – 2.31)*	1.52 (1.02 – 2.27)*	1.62 (1.06 – 2.46)*	3.42 (2.22 – 5.25)*	2.92 (1.84 – 4.63)*	3.30 (2.13 – 5.11)*	3.40 (2.21 – 5.25)*
Did you received a verbal homecoming								
No								
Yes	0.53 (0.39 – 0.74)*	0.56 (0.40 – 0.77)*	0.55 (0.39 – 0.76)*	0.55 (0.40 – 0.76)*	0.79 (0.54 – 1.17)	0.88 (0.59 – 1.32)	0.82 (0.55 – 1.22)	0.83 (0.56 – 1.22)

NB: Satisfied is used as reference category for relationship satisfaction analysis; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, engagement type, serving status, relationship type, and all variables in the model

Appendix 4: Discussed divorce or separation mediation analysis data

Table 84 Adjusted† OR and 95% confidence interval for socio-demographic and military characteristics associated with discussing divorce or separation in the last year; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Demographics	Adjusted OR			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Socio-demographics				
Childhood family relationship adversity				
0				
1	1.16 (0.94 – 1.42)	1.14 (0.92 – 1.41)	1.14 (0.93 – 1.40)	1.13 (0.91 – 1.38)
2+	1.48 (1.24 – 1.76)*	1.35 (1.14 – 1.62)*	1.42 (1.19 – 1.69)*	1.44 (1.21 – 1.71)*
Childhood antisocial behaviour				
No				
Yes	1.37 (1.13 – 1.66)*	1.29 (1.06 – 1.57)*	1.34 (1.09 – 1.62)*	1.28 (1.05 – 1.55)*
Relationship type				
Married				
Co-habiting	1.63 (1.31 – 2.03)*	1.57 (1.26 – 1.97)*	1.587 (1.26 – 1.95)*	1.57 (1.26 – 1.96)*
Long term relationship	2.10 (1.66 – 2.65)*	2.03 (1.60 – 2.58)*	2.08 (1.64 – 2.64)*	1.99 (1.58 – 2.53)*
Parental status				
No				
Yes	1.68 (1.41 – 1.98)*	1.66 (1.39 – 1.98)*	1.64 (1.38 – 1.95)*	1.67 (1.40 – 1.98)*
Military characteristics				
Service				
Naval services	0.75 (0.60 – 0.94)*	0.74 (0.59 – 0.93)*	0.76 (0.61 – 0.96)*	0.74 (0.59 – 0.93)*
Army				
RAF	0.80 (0.66 – 0.98)*	0.81 (0.66 – 0.99)*	0.83 (0.67 – 1.01)	0.82 (0.66 – 0.99)*
Rank				
Officer	0.70 (0.57 – 0.85)*	0.70 (0.57 – 0.85)*	0.71 (0.58 – 0.87)*	0.71 (0.58 – 0.86)*
NCO				
Other rank	1.15 (0.94 – 1.42)	1.09 (0.88 – 1.35)	1.08 (0.88 – 1.34)	1.10 (0.89 – 1.37)
Engagement type				
Regular				
Reserve	0.77 (0.62 – 0.97)*	0.79 (0.63 – 0.99)*	0.79 (0.64 – 0.99)*	0.80 (0.64 – 0.99)*
Deployment				
Not Deployed				
Deployed	1.25 (1.07 – 1.46)*	1.27 (1.09 – 1.49)*	1.25 (1.07 – 1.47)*	1.23 (1.05 – 1.44)*

NB: 'No' response is used as reference category; OR statistics are weighted; *p <0.05; †OR adjusted for all variables in the table

Table 85 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and discussing divorce or separation in the last year; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Deployment experiences	**Discussed divorce: Yes**			
	Original model	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**
Work matched trade, experiences, ability				
Yes				
No, generally above my ability	1.92 (1.32 – 2.79)*	1.64 (1.10 – 2.44)*	1.86 (1.28 – 2.72)*	1.77 (1.20 – 2.61)*
No, generally below my ability	1.12 (0.69 – 1.82)	1.03 (0.64 – 1.65)	1.07 (0.66 – 1.72)	1.06 *(0.67 – 1.68)
Combat exposure	1.01 (1.00 – 1.02)*	1.01 (1.00 – 1.01)*	1.01 (0.99 – 1.01)	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed				
Disagree				
Agree	1.43 (1.01 – 2.02)*	1.29 (0.91 – 1.83)	1.36 (0.96 – 1.94)	1.48 (1.04 – 2.10)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away				
Yes, and it was enough				
Yes, but it was not enough	1.33 (0.97 – 1.83)	1.30 (0.95 – 1.79)	1.28 (0.93 – 1.76)	1.32 (0.97 – 1.81)
No, no support was provided	1.41 (1.06 – 1.88)*	1.33 (0.99 – 1.78)	1.36 (1.01 – 1.82)*	1.41 (1.05 – 1.88)*
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed				
Disagree				
Agree	2.50 (1.46 – 4.26)*	2.25 (1.32 – 3.82)*	2.48 (1.45 – 4.24)*	2.25 (1.30 – 3.91)*

NB: No is used as reference; ORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, and all variables in the table

Appendix 5: Impact of career on relationship mediation analysis data

Table 86 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographics and military characteristics associated with perceived impact of military career on relationships; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

	Impact of military career on relationship							
	Positive Impact				Negative Impact			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Socio-demographics								
Age (years)	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)*	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)*	1.02 (1.00 – 1.03)*	1.02 (1.01 – 1.03)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*
Gender								
Male								
Female	0.87 (0.67 – 1.13)	0.88 (0.637 – 1.45)	0.88 (0.68 – 1.15)	0.89 (0.68 – 1.16)	0.72 (0.56 – 0.91)*	0.67 (0.53 – 0.86)*	0.71 (0.56 – 0.91)*	0.75 (0.59 – 0.95)*
Childhood family relationship adversity								
0								
1	0.97 (0.79 – 1.18)	0.97 (0.79 – 1.19)	0.96 (0.78 – 1.17)	0.96 (0.78 – 1.17)	1.02 (0.85 – 1.23)	1.00 (0.83 – 1.20)	1.00 (0.83 – 1.20)	0.99 (0.83 – 1.19)
2+	1.04 (0.87 – 1.25)	1.03 (0.86 – 1.23)	1.03 (0.86 – 1.23)	1.02 (0.85 – 1.23)	1.42 (1.21 – 1.66)*	1.31 (1.11 – 1.54)*	1.37 (1.16 – 1.60)*	1.38 (1.17 – 1.61)*
Childhood antisocial behaviour								
No								
Yes	1.28 (1.01 – 1.62)*	1.25 (0.99 – 1.58)	1.25 (0.99 – 1.59)	1.23 (0.97 – 1.55)	1.31 (1.06 – 1.60)*	1.23 (1.00 – 1.51)*	1.26 (1.03 – 1.55)*	1.19 (0.97 – 1.46)
Relationship type								
Married								
Co-habiting	0.73 (0.57 – 0.94)*	0.72 (0.56 – 0.94)*	0.72 (0.56 – 0.93)*	0.72 (0.56 – 0.93)*	1.26 (1.02 – 1.57)*	1.23 (0.99 – 1.53)	1.22 (0.98 – 1.52)	1.22 (0.98 – 1.52)
Long term relationship	0.75 (0.56 – 0.99)*	0.730.55 – 0.97)*	0.73 (0.55 – 0.98)*	0.74 (0.55 – 0.98)*	1.69 (1.34 – 2.14)*	1.69 (1.34 – 2.15)*	1.67 (1.32 – 2.10)*	1.62 (1.28 – 2.06)*
Parental status								
No								
Yes	0.92 (0.78 – 1.09)	0.92 (0.78 – 1.09)	0.92 (0.78 – 1.09)	0.92 (0.78 – 1.09)	1.15 (0.98 – 1.34)	1.14 (0.97 – 1.34)	1.14 (0.97 – 1.33)	1.14 (0.97 – 1.34)
Military characteristics								
Service								
Naval services	0.86 (0.69 – 1.08)	0.86 (0.69 – 1.08)	0.86 (0.69 – 1.87)	0.86 (0.69 – 1.08)	1.05 (0.86 – 1.27)	1.06 (0.87 – 1.29)	1.07 (0.88 – 1.31)	1.05 (0.86 – 1.28)
Army								
RAF	0.73 (0.59 – 0.88)*	0.72 (0.59 – 0.88)*	0.72 (0.59 – 0.89)*	0.73 (0.60 – 0.89)*	0.96 (0.80 – 1.14)	0.97 (0.81 – 1.17)	0.99 (0.83 – 1.18)	0.97 (0.81 – 1.16)
Rank								
Officer	1.21 (1.00 – 1.46)*	1.21 (1.01 – 1.46)*	1.21 (1.00 – 1.46)*	1.20 (0.99 – 1.45)	1.49 (1.25 – 1.77)*	1.51 (1.26 – 1.80)*	1.51 (1.27 – 1.80)*	1.48 (1.25 – 1.76)*
NCO								
Other rank	1.21 (0.93 – 1.58)	1.20 (0.92 – 1.57)	1.19 (0.91 – 1.55)	1.19 (0.92 – 1.55)	0.93 (0.75 – 1.16)	0.87 (0.70 – 1.09)	0.88 (0.71 – 1.10)	0.91 (0.73 – 1.32)
Engagement type								
Regular								
Reserve	0.82 (0.66 – 1.01)	0.83 (0.67 – 1.02)	0.82 (0.66 – 1.02)	0.82 (0.66 – 1.01)	0.57 (0.46 – 0.71)*	0.58 (0.47 – 0.72)*	0.58 (0.47 – 0.72)*	0.57 (0.46 – 0.71)*
Time deployed in last 3 years								
Less than 13 months								
13 + months	1.02 (0.72 – 1.44)	1.04 (0.73 – 1.47)	1.03 (0.73 – 1.46)	1.02 (0.72 – 1.45)	1.85 (1.42 – 2.40)*	1.84 (1.41 – 2.41)*	1.84 (1.42 – 2.40)*	1.82 (1.40 – 2.37)*
Serving status								
Serving								
Left	0.95 (0.78 – 1.13)	0.93 (0.77 – 1.11)	0.93 (0.77 – 1.12)	0.93 (0.77 – 1.11)	0.56 (0.47 – 0.67)*	0.54 (0.45 – 0.85)*	0.54 (0.45 – 0.64)*	0.54 (0.45 – 0.65)*

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † MORs adjusted for all variables in the table;

Table 87 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experience and impact of military career on relationship; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), Probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

	Impact of military career on relationship							
Deployment experiences	**Positive impact**				**Negative impact**			
	Original model	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**	**Original model**	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**
Work matched trade, experiences, ability								
Yes								
No, generally above my ability	1.37 (0.77 – 2.42)	1.33 (0.75 – 2.37)	1.35 (0.75 – 2.39)	1.28 (0.72 – 2.29)	1.81 (1.14 – 2.87)*	1.63 (1.01 – 2.61)*	1.76 (1.11 – 2.79)*	1.62 (1.02 – 2.56)*
No, generally below my ability	1.23 (0.68 – 2.21)	1.23 (0.68 – 2.01)	1.19 (0.66 – 2.16)	1.19 (0.66 – 2.16)	0.95 (0.57 – 1.58)	0.91 (0.54 – 1.52)	0.92 (0.52 – 1.54)	0.87 (0.52 – 1.45)
Time in a hostile area								
Not at all								
Up to one week	1.27 (0.88 – 1.83)	1.27 (0.88 – 1.84)	1.27 (0.88 – 1.83)	1.26 (0.87 – 1.83)	1.09 (0.78 – 1.52)	1.08 (0.77 – 1.50)	1.07 (0.77 – 1.50)	1.06 (0.76 – 1.48)
One week to one month	1.05 (0.70 – 1.56)	1.05 (0.70 – 1.56)	1.05 (0.71 – 1.57)	1.04 (0.70 – 1.56)	1.53 (1.08 – 2.16)*	1.47 (1.03 – 2.10)*	1.52 (1.07 – 2.15)*	1.51 (1.06 – 2.15)*
More than a month	1.39 (0.96 – 2.03)	1.38 (0.84 – 2.00)	1.38 (0.85 – 2.01)	1.41 (0.97 – 2.06)	1.77 (1.28 – 2.44)*	1.69 (1.22 – 2.36)*	1.70 (1.23 – 2.37)*	1.73 (1.24 – 2.41)*
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit								
Agree								
Neither	0.76 (0.51 – 1.15)	0.78 (0.52 – 1.74)	0.77 (0.51 – 1.017)	0.77 (0.51 – 1.16)	0.99 (0.71 – 1.37)	1.02 (0.73 – 1.42)	1.00 (0.72 – 1.34)	1.04 (0.75 – 1.44)
Disagree	0.73 (0.44 – 1.19)	0.71 (0.43 – 1.15)	0.72 (0.44 – 1.17)	0.73 (0.44 – 1.19)	1.74 (1.18 – 2.56)*	1.34 (0.89 – 2.08)	1.41 (0.95 – 2.12)	1.51 (1.00 – 2.26)*
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed								
Disagree								
Agree	1.04 (0.64 – 1.70)	1.01 (0.62 – 1.66)	1.02 (0.62 – 1.67)	1.07 (0.65 – 1.75)	1.74 (1.18 – 2.56)*	1.57 (1.05 – 2.33)*	1.69 (1.14 – 2.49)*	1.82 (1.23 – 2.69)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away								
Yes, and it was enough								
Yes, but it was not enough	0.81 (0.57 – 1.15)	0.80 (0.56 – 1.13)	0.80 (0.56 – 1.14)	0.80 (0.56 – 1.13)	1.31 (0.97 – 1.78)	1.28 (0.94 – 1.75)	1.28 (0.94 – 1.74)	1.27 (0.93 – 1.74)
No, no support was provided	0.89 (0.64 – 1.25)	0.88 (0.63 – 1.23)	0.89 (0.64 – 1.24)	0.91 (0.65 – 1.27)	1.84 (1.39 – 2.44)*	1.81 (1.36 – 2.42)*	1.80 (1.36 – 2.39)*	1.87 (1.40 – 2.48)*
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed								
Disagree								
Agree	1.55 (0.66 – 3.63)	1.52 (0.64 – 3.57)	1.46 (0.62 – 3.44)	1.45 (0.62 – 3.51)	2.27 (1.15 – 4.49)*	1.95 (0.97 – 3.95)	1.69 (1.14 – 2.49)*	2.03 (0.99 – 4.16)

NB: No impact is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † adjusted for age, gender, education, childhood family relationship adversity, relationship type, engagement type, time deployed in the last three years, and all variables in the model

Appendix 6: Global relationship functioning mediation analysis data

Table 88 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographics associated with global relationship functioning; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Socio-demographics	Global relationship functioning score											
	1				2				3			
	Original model	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**	**Original model**	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**	**Original model**	**With symptoms of CMD**	**With probable PTSD**	**With alcohol misuse**
Age (years)	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)*	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)*	0.97 (0.96 - 0.98)*	0.97 (0.96 – 0.98)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.98 (0.97 – 0.99)*	0.98 (0..97 – 1.00)	0.99 (0.97 – 1.02)	0.99 (0.97 – 1.02)	0.99 (0.97 – 1.02)	0.99 (0.97 – 1.02)
Childhood family relationship adversity												
0												
1	1.09 (0.91 – 1.29)	1.06 (0.89 – 1.27)	1.07 (0.89 – 1.27)	1.07 (0.89 – 1.28)	1.14 (0.87 – 1.51)	1.10 (0.83 – 1.46)	1.11 (0.85 - 1.47)	1.08 (0.82 – 1.43)	1.42 (0.87 – 2.30)	1.38 (0.85 – 2.25)	1.36 (0.84 – 2.21)	1.38 (0.85 – 2.24)
2+	1.40 (1.20 – 1.63)*	1.32 (1.23 – 1.54)*	1.35 (1.16 – 1.58)*	1.38 (1.18 – 1.61)*	1.60 (1.27 – 2.01)*	1.45 (1.14 – 1.83)*	1.54 (1.22 – 1.92)*	1.54 (1.23 – 1.95)*	2.42 (1.63 – 3.59)*	2.06 (1.38 – 3.09)*	2.26 (1.52 – 3.36)*	2.29 (1.54 – 3.43)*
Childhood antisocial behaviour												
No												
Yes	1.22 (1.00 – 1.49)*	1.18 (0.97 – 1.44)	1.19 (0.98 – 1.45)	1.14 (0.94 – 1.39)	1.52 (1.17 – 1.97)*	1.42 (1.09 – 1.86)*	1.47 (1.12 – 1.91)*	1.39 (1.07 – 1.82)*	1.60 (1.06 – 2.41)*	1.37 (0.90 – 2.10)	1.52 (1.00 – 2.31)*	1.32 (0.87 – 2.00)
Relationship type												
Married												
Co-habiting	1.61 (1.31 – 1.99)*	1.60 (1.29 – 1.98)*	1.58 (1.28 – 1.94)*	1.59 (1.29 – 1.97)*	1.74 (1.28 – 2.37)*	1.69 (1.23 – 2.32)*	1.67 (1.22 – 2.29)*	1.71 (1.25 – 2.32)*	1.38 (0.75 – 2.52)	1.31 (0.71 – 2.40)	1.30 (0.82 – 2.33)	1.19 (0.65 – 2.21)
Long term relationship	1.95 (1.54 – 2.46)*	1.96 (1.55 – 2.49)*	1.95 (1.54 – 2.46)*	1.89 (1.49 – 2.40*)	2.45 (1.75 – 3.45)*	2.47 (1.74 – 3.50)*	2.46 (1.75 – 3.48)*	2.38 (1.68 – 3.36)*	3.30 (1.97 – 5.49)*	3.27 (1.94 – 5.51)*	3.25 (1.94 – 5.43)*	3.00 (1.80 – 5.03)*
Parental status												
No												
Yes	1.23 (1.06 – 1.42)*	1.23 (1.06 – 1.47)*	1.22 (1.05 – 1.42)*	1.22 (1.05 – 1.42)*	1.68 (1.34 – 2.11)*	1.68 (1.35 – 2.13)*	1.64 (1.30 – 2.07)*	1.68 (1.33 – 2.11)*	1.37 (0.95 – 1.98)	1.39 (0.95 – 2.03)	1.35 (0.93 – 1.96)	1.35 (0.94 – 1.96)

NB: 0 score is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table;

Table 88 cont. Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for military characteristics associated with global relationship functioning; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Military characteristics	Global relationship functioning score											
	1				2				3			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Rank												
Officer	1.30 (1.11 – 1.53)*	1.30 (1.10 – 1.53)*	1.32 (1.12 – 1.55)*	1.30 (1.10 – 1.53)*	0.96 (0.74 – 1.25)	0.97 (0.74 – 1.27)	0.99 (0.76 – 1.29)	0.97 (0.75 – 1.27)	1.09 (0.71 – 1.67)	1.09 (0.72 – 1.68)	1.14 (0.74 – 1.74)	1.10 (0.72 – 1.68)
NCO												
Other rank	0.87 (0.71 – 1.08)	0.83 (0.67 – 1.03)	0.84 (0.68 – 1.04)	0.85 (0.69 – 1.06)	0.99 (0.73 – 1.34)	0.91 (0.67 – 1.25)	0.93 (0.68 – 1.27)	0.96 (0.71 – 1.31)	0.82 (0.48 – 1.40)	0.71 (0.41 – 1.23)	0.74 (0.43 – 1.28)	0.78 (0.46 – 1.34)
Engagement type												
Regular												
Reserve	0.68 (0.55 – 0.83)*	0.67 (0.54 – 0.82)*	0.68 (0.55 – 0.84)*	0.67 (0.55 – 0.83)*	0.81 (0.60 – 1.11)	0.83 (0.61 – 1.14)	0.83 (0.61 – 1.13)	0.83 (0.60 – 1.13)	0.78 (0.48 – 1.29)	0.83 (0.50 – 1.37)	0.80 (0.49 – 1.30)	0.80 (0.50 – 1.32)
Deployment status												
No												
Yes	0.88 (0.76 – 1.01)	0.88 (0.77 – 1.02)	0.87 (0.76 – 1.01)	0.87 (0.75 – 1.01)	1.42 (1.14 – 1.76)*	1.43 (1.15 – 1.78)*	1.39 (1.11 – 1.83)*	1.38 (1.11 – 1.71)*	0.92 (0.63 – 1.35)	0.97 (0.66 – 1.41)	0.91 (0.62 – 1.33)	0.92 (0.63 – 1.34)
Time deployed in last 3 years												
Less than 13 months												
13 + months	1.76 (1.38 – 2.26)*	1.75 (0.76 – 1.02)	1.76 (1.37 – 2.26)*	1.75 (1.36 – 2.25)*	1.63 (1.15 – 2.31)*	1.60 (1.12 – 2.28)*	1.62 (1.14 – 2.31)*	1.56 (1.10 – 2.23)*	1.80 (1.04 – 3.12)*	1.71 (0.98 – 2.97)	1.77 (1.03 – 3.05)*	1.76 (1.04 – 3.00)*
Serving status												
Serving												
Left	0.62 (0.52 – 0.74)*	0.61 (0.51 – 0.72)*	0.59 (0.49 – 0.71)*	0.60 (0.50 - 0.72)*	0.82 (0.63 – 1.07)	0.79 (0.61 – 1.03)	0.77 (0.59 – 1.01)	0.78 (0.60 – 1.01)	0.42 (0.26 – 0.70)*	0.38 (0.23 – 0.63)*	0.38 (0.23 – 0.63)*	0.40 (0.24 – 0.66)*

NB: 0 score is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; †MOR adjusted for all variables in the table

Table 89 Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and global relationship functioning (adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics); comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Deployment experiences	Global relationship functioning score											
	1				2				3			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Work matched trade, experiences, ability												
Yes												
No, generally above my ability	1.40 (0.86 – 2.27)	1.34 (0.84 – 2.20)	1.37 (0.85 – 2.22)	1.31 (0.81 – 2.10)	2.09 (1.22 – 3.61)*	1.95 (1.12 – 3.42)*	2.09 (1.21 – 3.61)*	1.90 (1.09 – 3.30)*	1.99 (1.08 – 3.69)*	1.57 (0.80 – 3.05)	1.90 (1.03 – 3.51)*	1.62 (0.89 – 2.95)*
No, generally below my ability	0.91 (0.54 – 1.55)	0.91 (0.54 – 1.53)	0.89 (0.53 – 1.52)	0.87 (0.51 – 1.49)	0.70 (0.35 – 1.41)	0.64 (0.31 – 1.32)	0.68 (0.34 – 1.38)	0.66 (0.33 - 1.33)	0.93 (0.39 – 2.25)	0.71 (0.30 – 1.67)	0.93 (0.39 – 2.22)	0.85 (0.37 – 1.96)
Believe in serious danger of injury or death												
Never												
Once or twice	0.91 (0.61 – 1.35)	0.91 (0.61 – 1.35)	0.91 (0.61 – 1.36)	0.93 (0.62 – 1.39)	0.82 (0.44 – 1.53)	0.80 (0.42 – 1.50)	1.31 (0.72 – 2.39)	0.81 (0.43 – 1.52)	1.66 (0.80 – 3.43)	1.39 (0.64 – 3.02)	1.59 (0.77 – 3.28)	1.61 (0.77 – 3.33)
Sometimes	1.50 (0.77 – 1.71)	1.11 (0.72 – 1.72)	1.15 (0.77 – 1.72)	1.15 (0.77 – 1.72)	1.29 (0.72 – 2.34)	1.26 (0.69 – 2.29)	1.31 (0.72 – 2.39)	1.33 (0.73 – 2.43)	2.02 (0.98 – 4.19)	1.72 (0.81 – 3.63)	1.96 (0.96 - 4.01)	2.03 (1.00 – 4.15)*
Many times	1.13 (0.73 – 1.74)	1.09 (0.72 – 1.72)	1.10 (0.71 – 1.70)	1.12 (0.72 – 1.73)	1.60 (0.88 – 2.87)	1.52 (0.83 – 2.79)	1.51 (0.83 – 2.74)	1.53 (0.84 – 2.78)	3.00 (1.46 – 6.16)*	2.68 (1.25 – 5.75)*	2.76 (1.34 – 5.67)*	2.831.38 – 5.83)*
Time in a hostile area												
Not at all												
Up to one week	1.14 (0.80 – 1.62)	1.15 (0.81 – 1.64)	1.13 (0.79 – 1.61)	1.12 (0.79 – 1.60)	1.19 (0.71 – 1.99)	1.22 (0.73 – 2.05)	1.15 (0.69 – 1.93)	1.05 (0.65 – 1.85)	1.28 (0.73 – 2.25)	1.29 (0.73 – 2.28)	1.21 (0.69 – 2.15)	1.18 (0.67 – 2.08)
One week to one month	1.80 (1.25 –2.57)*	1.82 (1.27 – 2.62)*	1.82 (1.27 – 2.62)*	1.80 (1.25 – 2.59)*	1.35 (0.79 – 2.28)	1.37 (0.81 – 2.34)	1.36 (0.80 – 2.31)	1.34 (0.79 – 2.28)	1.15 (0.64 – 2.05)	1.18 (0.64 – 2.16)	1.17 (0.66 – 2.08)	1.12 (0.62 – 2.02)
More than a month	1.42 (0.98 – 2.05)	1.42 (0.98 – 2.07)	1.41 (0.97 – 2.05)	1.39 (0.96 – 2.02)	1.21 (0.75 – 1.98)	1.18 (0.72 – 1.95)	1.15 (0.71 – 1.88)	1.15 (0.70 – 1.89)	1.36 (0.77 – 2.38)	1.29 (0.72 – 2.33)	1.33 (0.76 – 2.35)	1.31 (0.74 – 2.34)

NB: Score of 0 is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years;

Table 89 cont. Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and global relationship functioning (adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics); comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Deployment experiences	Global relationship functioning score											
	1				2				3			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Felt informed about what was happening in my unit												
Agree												
Neither	1.15 (0.83 – 1.61)	1.15 (0.82 – 1.60)	1.13 (0.81 – 1.58)	1.16 (0.83 – 1.62)	1.18 (0.75 – 1.86)	1.19 (0.74 – 1.89)	1.15 (0.72 – 1.83)	1.23 (0.78 – 1.95)	1.25 (0.76 – 2.07)	1.32 (0.79 – 2.21)	1.26 (0.76 – 2.09)	1.37 (0.83 – 2.29)
Disagree	1.23 (0.81 – 1.87)	1.15 (0.75 – 1.7)	1.18 (0.77 – 1.81)	1.20 (0.78 – 1.85)	1.66 (1.01 – 2.72)*	1.47 (0.87 – 2.47)	1.61 (0.97 – 2.68)	1.72 (1.04 – 2.84)*	1.34 (0.76 – 2.38)	1.05 (0.58 – 1.90)	1.31 (0.73 – 2.35)	1.39 (0.77 – 2.50)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed												
Disagree												
Agree	1.32 (0.87 – 1.61)	1.30 (0.85 – 1.99)	1.32 (0.87 – 2.01)	1.36 (0.90 – 2.07)	1.27 (0.75 – 2.15)	1.13 (0.66 – 1.93)	1.17 (0.69 – 1.99)	1.3 (0.78 – 2.27)	3.44 (2.07 – 5.71)*	3.07 (1.82 – 5.18)*	3.27 (1.96 – 5.47)*	3.55 (2.11 – 5.98)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away												
Yes, and it was enough												
Yes, but it was not enough	1.49 (1.09 – 2.03)*	1.44 (1.05 – 1.97)*	1.45 (1.06 – 1.99)*	1.42 (1.04 – 1.96)*	1.32 (0.87 – 2.00)	1.27 (0.83 – 1.94)	1.22 (0.80 – 1.86)	1.30 (0.85 – 1.99)	2.33 (1.32 – 4.10)*	2.40 (1.34 – 4.30)*	2.27 (1.29 – 4.00)*	2.32 (1.32 – 4.07)*
No, no support was provided	1.78 (1.32 – 2.39)*	1.77 (1.32 – 2.38)*	1.75 (1.30 – 2.35)*	1.77 (1.32 – 2.39)*	1.47 (0.98 – 2.21)	1.48 (0.98 – 2.24)	1.43 (0.94 – 2.15)	1.49 (0.99 – 2.26)	3.11 (1.93 – 5.03)*	3.24 (1.92 – 5.45)*	3.07 (1.88 – 5.01)*	3.24 (1.97 – 5.32)*

NB: Score of 0 is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years

Table 89 cont. Adjusted† MORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and global relationship functioning (adjusted for socio-demographic and military characteristics); comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of common mental disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Deployment experiences	Global relationship functioning score											
	1				2				3			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed												
Disagree												
Agree	0.97 (0.44 – 2.16)	0.90 (0.40 – 2.05)	0.96 (0.42 – 2.17)	0.90 (0.39 – 2.05)	3.79 (1.71 – 8.41)*	3.47 (1.56 – 7.69)*	3.78 (1.71 – 8.34)*	3.34 (1.47 – 7.57)*	4.68 (1.96 – 11.13)*	4.52 (1.86 – 11.04)*	4.69 (1.90 – 11.58)*	3.72 (1.42 – 9.73)*
Did you received a verbal homecoming												
No												
Yes	0.74 (0.57 – 0.96)*	0.74 (0.57 – 0.96)*	0.74 (0.56 – 0.96)*	0.75 (0.57 – 0.98)*	0.76 (0.53 – 1.08)	0.78 (0.54 – 1.12)	0.75 (0.52 – 1.07)	0.81 (0.57 – 1.16)	0.75 (0.49 – 1.15)	0.89 (0.56 – 1.42)	0.78 (0.51 – 1.21)	0.82 (0.53 – 1.28)

NB: Score of 0 is used as reference category; MORs are weighted; * p <0.05; † adjusted for age, childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, relationship type, parental status, rank, engagement type, and time deployed in the last three years

Appendix 7: Relationship or family problems as a result of deployment mediation analysis data

Table 90 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for socio-demographics and military characteristics associated with relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Demographics	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Socio-demographics				
Childhood family relationship adversity				
0				
1	1.42 (1.01 – 1.99)*	1.38 (0.97 – 1.96)	1.35 (0.95 – 1.90)	1.39 (0.99 – 1.97)
2+	1.50 (1.12 – 2.01)*	1.35 (1.00 – 1.83)*	1.45 (1.07 – 1.96)*	1.44 (1.07 – 1.94)*
Childhood antisocial behaviour*				
No				
Yes	2.14 (1.61 – 2.84)*	1.91 (1.42 – 2.56)*	1.95 (1.45 – 2.62)*	1.91 (1.43 – 2.54)*
Military characteristics				
Time deployed in last 3 years				
Less than 13 months				
13 + months	1.47 (1.05 – 2.05)*	1.32 (0.93 – 1.87)	1.43 (1.01 – 2.04)*	1.40 (0.99 – 1.98)

NB: No is used as reference category for all analyses; ORs are weighted; * $p < 0.05$; † adjusted for all variables in the table

Table 91 Adjusted† ORs and 95% confidence intervals for associations between deployment-related experiences and reporting relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment; comparison of original MORS and MORS with the addition of symptoms of Common Mental Disorder (CMD), probable Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and alcohol misuse

Deployment experiences	Relationship or family problems as a result of most recent deployment			
	Original model	With symptoms of CMD	With probable PTSD	With alcohol misuse
Believe in serious danger of injury or death				
Never				
Once or twice	1.73 (1.00 – 2.97)*	1.60 (0.91 – 2.79)	1.72 (0.99 – 2.96)	1.75 (1.01 – 3.02)*
Sometimes	1.73 (1.01 – 2.97)*	1.58 (0.90 – 2.78)	1.76 (1.02 – 3.03)*	1.76 (1.02 – 305)*
Many times	2.05 (1.15 – 3.65)*	1.90 (1.04 – 3.47)*	2.04 (1.15 – 3.63)*	2.02 (1.13 – 3.62)*
Combat exposure	1.01 (1.00 – 1.02)*	1.01 (0.99 – 1.01)	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)	1.00 (0.99 – 1.01)
I did not receive enough support from my family whilst deployed				
Agree				
Disagree	1.53 (1.04 – 2.25)*	1.34 (0.90 – 2.00)	1.53 (1.03 – 2.27)*	1.56 (1.006 – 2.32)*
Military provided support for my spouse whilst I was away				
Yes, and it was enough				
Yes, but it was not enough	1.63 (1.11 – 2.38)*	1.66 (1.12 – 2.46)*	1.57 (1.08 – 2.29)*	1.58 (1.08 – 2.32)*
No, no support was provided	2.20 (1.58 – 3.07)*	2.07 (1.45 – 2.94)*	2.05 (1.46 – 2.88)*	2.17 (1.55 – 3.05)*
Serious financial problems at home whilst deployed				
Disagree				
Agree	3.63 (2.07 – 6.34)*	3.28 (1.86 – 5.78)*	3.44 (1.94 – 6.09)*	3.09 (1.70 – 5.63)*

NB: No is used as reference category; All analyses are weighted * p <0.05; † adjusted for childhood family relationship adversity, childhood antisocial behaviour, and deployed for more than 13 months in three years and for all variables in the table

Appendix 8: Qualitative study interview schedule

Where do you live? (Prompt - In barracks? With your spouse?)

Romantic relationships

- Tell me about your wife/girlfriend/partner? (is she military?)
- Tell me about your relationship? (how you met/how satisfied)
- Are there specific challenges to having a relationship when you are in the Army?
    - How was it different when you were single (in the Army?)

Friends and family:

- Tell me about your family
- Tell me about your friends (outside of the Army)
- How important to you are these relationships?
- What would life be like without them?

Effects of deployment

- How many times have you been deployed?
- What effect did deployment have on your relationships? (Prompt – friends/family)
- Tell me about your relationship with your wife/partner/girlfriend when you are deployed (Prompt - What is the level of communication like? Is this good/bad? How could it be improved?)
- How do you manage your relationship whilst deployed? (Prompt - What would make deployment easier in terms of managing your relationships?)

Returning home

- When you returned home from deployment where did you go?
    - Base home? Where is home? Family, wife etc?
- When you return from deployment what is the first thing you did/ tend to do?
- How do you find reintegrating with family and friends?
- Tell me about your relationship with your wife/partner/girlfriend when you first return from deployment? (Does this change over time?)
- What are the challenges to returning home after deployment in terms of relationships? What could be done to improve this process?

Appendix 9: Qualitative study: Example of superordinate theme table for Peter

Themes	Page/line	Extract
Transitions and balance between Army and family		
Army offered me the life I wanted – away from family	8/300	"I wouldn't be able to have the life I wanted, the Army had it all for me"
	9/312	"I just wanted to get away, get away from Manchester and start a new life really"
It's a "lads life" – the double life of a squady!	3/97	"cos of the job we have, back in the battalion you could go out Wednesday night and get absolutely hammered as long as you can stand up in line...as long as you can do your job...the culture of going out is ripe...all you're social activities are around alcohol...and getting the most birds...showing off a bit"
	3/75	"I weren't very committed to it... I had two lives, I had my Army life down London...at weekends I'd go home and see her"
	2/68	"I wasn't coming home as much I was living, going out in London, living that life"
	4/120	"If you're not married and you've just got a girlfriend you've got no, they're in Manchester or wherever so you're going out"
	3/79	"it wasn't until about a year, a year into the relationship that I actually started thinking about settling down and growing up a bit"
	3/89	"yeah a lot of the lads don't really settle down until when you start getting to lance sergeant and sergeant that's when you start making a family...it's not until you start getting older and start settling down"
With maturity comes settling and committing	4/130	"I mean it's when you start getting older and maturing a little bit and you start thinking about the future...I settled down"
	26/987	"I've grew up a little, get it out your system"
	5/145	"yeah it weren't until I was about 25 until I bought a house and settled down"
Relationship is an anchor back to home	3/70	"It turned out she knew some of my family and she lived about 100, say about a mile away from where I lived and grew up...I

		started going out less and started going home more”
	9/310	
		“now I’ve obviously got ties back into Manchester”
	2/50	
Prioritise family before career		“That’s why I got posted up here, because I knew we’d have more time off and I could get more time off...and obviously it’s only 100 miles rather than the 200 odd miles from London”
	14/537	
		“I’ve give things up in the Army like my career paths, I’ve got to go different ways...I wanted to go special forces...”
	11/385	
		“so I’ll have to give up my life and make sacrifices if that’s what I have to do that’s what I’ll do. She’s that I mean, ...I’d miss it...but if that’s what you have to do then that’s what you do”
	3/104	
Challenge of leaving “lads life” behind		“It’s not until you start getting older and start settling down. It was hard at the beginning”
	4/133	
		“living the lads life all the time...it is hard to get out of that”
	9/306	
		“it’s the going out that’s what, that’s the hardest”
	8/263	
Keep home and Army separate		“so that means my wife stays at our house in Manchester and I move where ever the Army moves”
	8/596	
		“especially if you live on the pad, it’s like a soap opera, everybody knows everybody...that’s why one reason why we don’t want to get a I don’t want to move on to the pad”
	21/804	
		“In Manchester where I met her, it’s nothing to do with the Army, she doesn’t really know”
	22/813	
		“I just take my watch off...cos in the Army I’m always on timings always, so what I go home I don’t really wear a watch”
	1/24	
		“When I’m here I’m very military and I’m in the Army, but when I’m at home at the weekends, I have nothing to do with the Army, I don’t even tell people I’m in the Army”

Army life creates extra relationship challenges I can't be a full time parent	2/39	"especially when something happens at home...you don't know what's going on, I find that quite hard cos you're not, you know you're not going home at night"
	10/363	"it got me the other day...my missus took her to the park with one of her mates...she told me and I was like started to get upset cos I should be taking her to he park, I should be there, what else am I going to miss, so it is hard"
	2/38	"the Monday to Friday you just looking at Friday to go home, so it's hard"
Constant separations make it hard	5/159	"if you add all the days up it's probably about 30 days about a month, in a year, take all the weekends, I work a lot of weekends, see if I miss a weekend then that's two weeks I've gone without seeing my wife or my girlfriends"
	6/195	"I mean 9 weeks it sounds mad looking back on it when I say it like that that's probably the longest we've spent together...you've just got to get through it"
	25/952	"It's like on a Sunday for me, Sunday I just look at the clock all the time, right I've got 5, I've got 2 hours till I have to leave"
Unpredictable and uncontrollable absences make it harder!	17/623	"she had to go to weddings and her mates were going out the same time to the pictures and she was going on her, cos she had two of her mates with boyfriends and she would be on her own...and it does make you feel bad"
	17/639	"yeah she'll kick off cos I've let her down again"
	11/391	"It does sometimes, you can't just turn around and say no. If I get a phone call now saying you're working this weekend you've gotta do it...at first she couldn't get her head around that "what do you mean?....not coming home that's that's the thing we fall out about"
	17/632	"we do fall out about not being there and missing things, like missing her birthday...and weddings...it's the only thing we fall out about to be honest"
Battle for control between wife and Army!	17/622	"the Army is always going to win no matter what"

	18/671	"you know she hates the Army she hates it she does always tells me and that...that they can just take you know, that you don't have any life if they tell you you're doing something you're doing it and I'm never at home cos of the Army"
A good Army wife...		
Wife is a secure base	1/8	"my wife stays in our house in Manchester and I move where ever the Army moves"
	13/465	"being away cos she knows where you are and I know where she is"
Acceptance of Army demands and having a part time partner	1/21	"So she's been part of the Army, not been in the Army, if you know what I mean, so she knows about the Army and she knows what I do"
	6/200	"I think that's why I waited a long time to make sure she was happy and knew what she was getting herself into"
	17/615	"Yeah it's knowledge, you know, they don't know the Army and they think it's...once I've explained it to her...once she understood that"
She is strong and independent	1/27	"cos she's got her own life in Manchester"
	6/198	"It depends on the person you are with, like my wife's a really strong person"
	16/604	"It depends on them really if they're strong and got their own life...if they just sit at home doing nothing, you gonna get bored of it...because they are working and going out and having her own career...breaks it up a bit"
She kept close to her own family and friends – need them when I am away	5/164	"It's the wife that has to give up everything...it's really hard to transfer, like my mrs...cos her friends and all her famly are from Manchester, it's a lot to say I'm going to give it up, and when I'm away in Afghan or on tour...she needs that family network...the Army is good but it's not your close friends"
Despite the challenges she supports my career	14/530	"Yeah she wouldn't like it, I think she'd still stay with me but she..."
	18/675	"that's what I want to do so she supports me in that, but she doesn't like the Army"

Our relationship works because....		
We value the precious time we have together	6/211	"I think cos we don't see each other that much when we are together it's precious time and we don't really fall out and we are similar you know everything so we don't really fallout"
	8/287	"cos we don't see each other we value that time, where we don't argue over petty little things...it seems a little petty to me cos we don't have that...if we fall out all weekend then that's my weekend spoilt and her weekend spoilt"
Love and trust is all you need	7/256	She trusts me and I trust her, it's that and if you've not got no trust, especially being in the Army, you can't do it"
	8/277	"no matter what you're in, if you love each other and trust each other then it's good if you don't have then it's not going to work no matter what job you do"
Deployment makes us closer and stronger	7/243	"In a way it makes you stronger, you know being far away and doing what we do"
	13/468	"you want to see her, you can't wait to see her, you can't wait to see her at the other end of the tour, it makes you more closer, but...being this day to day routine in camp working...not the emotional side...it's just normal then...you're making more effort when you're away on tour...more romantic and stuff"
Our relationship is more stable than some civilian's	7/239	"they've already had problems with their relationships, their relationships haven't been as stable as mine"
	8/283	"my relationship is better than there's they are constantly fighting and falling out and he's walking out all the time...sometimes we look smug cos we're always happy and always loving and that"
Challenges of deploying		
Fear of death and guilt for deserting wife and child	7/223	"I thought I can't die at Christmas...I'm not that bothered if I die I die, but it's what you leave behind, that's what I am always worried about, if you die at Christmas every Christmas from now on is going to be tainted with your death, that's the hardest thing to get my head around"
	9/330	"I went 2 weeks where I didn't ring her cos I couldn't, then she starts panicking and then it makes you feel guilty"

	20/746	"when I came back it was just a relieve more than anything"
	23/878	"I need to get out of that tour, cos I can't bare going away"
	6/217	"I'm feeling the same but trying to be stronger"
I have to be strong for her even though I am scared!	20/748 20/758	"It'll be alright it will be fine, but then you just think fucking hell like but then when you get back you're like told you it would be alright and then makes her feel better...like you try to reassure her, and when you get back it is a relieve you think thank god for that!"
	20/770	"I was petrified the first time I went out I was scared and worried and panicking but I never said that to her, I always no it will be fine"
	6/215	"if I had to tell her everything that had happened...she'd be panicking every time I went, cos she'd be more fretting...I play it down a lot so she's not worried when I go away...she's worried about me then I'm worried about her worrying about me!" "She'll be on the phone to me going oh I this might happen and I've seen this on the news you and then I'm feeling the same!"
Harder for wife – she sees worst case scenario on the news	21/785 21/795	"you've got a lot of distractions where like her being at home it was on the news all the time and that was hard for her, some got very upset every time something about the regiment came up...we don't see that...she was upset telling me "when I saw that someone had died on the news I thought it was you straight away"
	5/181	"It's more worrying about her really then myself, cos I know that she will be getting upset, you know if somebody dies the first thing that comes in like"
Uncertain communication makes it harder	9/337	"Yeah I was lucky in that role I had we had use of a satellite phone...we didn't have to queue up...so we had that luxury where as other companies...didn't have that opportunity...when you're wife's home or your family and queue up for about half an hour to get on the hones, but for me it was quite easier"

Deployment separation is manageable		
I get to do my job	21/778	"I'm not upset I'm quite happy to be there, that's what I want to do"
	21/783	"That's what I'm here for that's what I joined the Army for"
I have my job to distract and focus on	9/336	"you just go out and do something to get it out of your mind"
	12/425	"but then something happens so you get on with that, so you've got lots of distractions"
Knowing I have a safe and secure home away from the dangers of the deployment	12/419	"I don't 'think that it impacts on my job I mean at night you look at photos and stuff like that and you get photos sent out so you've always got that"
Easy adjustment and glad to be home	21/804	"when I'm on leave and stuff like that, she's very set in her way and I just take my watch off...I'm too laid back sometimes"
	22/841	"It's very much sitting at home...yeah just live a normal life really...just get back into it"
	23/857	"My time at home is precious to me, ...I'm glad I'm back and don't have to worry about if the other blokes are alright I don't have to worry about what I'm stepping in"
	25/949	"It's a focus for some people, for most people...and you're out and you think thank god for that"
Army makes compensations for married couples	11/395	"cos I'm married now it's a bit different cos you do get your know you have to have you certain amount of notice before they can take a weekend of you or put you on a duty"
	24/907	"normally the married men get the nest ones (R&R dates) so if your over Christmas normally if you've got kids and that then you go home for Christmas, if you're single you go home for new year"
Lots of relationships fail because...		
Relationship break ups are common	14/513	"yeah again, I mean one, my mate, one of my mates has just split up with his wife..."
	23/885	"Yeah they've split up now, yeah their one of the ones that have split up"
Have to be fully committed	15/545	"No he weren't committed no"
Army culture and separations provides opportunity to cheat	14/500	"I don't think it's because the job as much I think it's because of the social aspect of it...get drunk and pick up and cheat on their wives...they get caught out eventually...it's

		the social aspect that breaks up marriages”
	4/108	“two of my mates have just split up from their wives cos not seen them and going out and meeting other people and stuff like that so”
	23/889	“he came up here and started playing away cos he weren’t getting home, he was staying here all weekend and going out and meeting and going out with people...in the Army cheat on them, that’s what breaks up, cheating, going out, not the job, it’s the going out”
	7/258	“I know wives what, their husbands have been in Afghanistan and they’ve been in night clubs chatting up other blokes from different regiments”
	7/261	“pads estate, that’s what tends that’s what the wives, once the husband is away the wives go out...you know don’t like their husbands or whatever and they go out”
Wives might get tired of compromising	18/670	“sometimes it just gets to a point though when they’ve had enough, they’ve had 20 years of it and you know they get sick of it”
Even strong couples fail	23/892	“would never have thought it they were always seemed like a strong couple”
	14/514	“been married longer than what I have...and when he’s on tour...they’re lovey dovey and caring and writing her loads of letters like I was, and then got back and just got bored of it so now get divorce”

Appendix 10: Qualitative study: Master table of themes

version 2

A. Positives

Supported and secure base:	**Page/line**
Daniel: the wives are always there, I'm sure XXXX (wife) would be there if I do, er cos she looked after me after my head wound she was the main...	15/526
Peter: Being away cos she knows where you are and I know where she is	13/465
Terry: Need to talk to someone talk to my wife and you know she sat there and listened	16/564
Neil: JXXX was the only person I would phone really for the whole time I was out there to be honest with you	11/376
Jack: Cos your wife knows when something's not right...you can trust your wife if you tell her something	11/412
Scott: It's just being home...when I am on tour the one thing I look forward to is coming home	15/545

Appreciation and strength:	**Page/line**
Scott: The joy of being home and being together again...best things about going away is coming back...it sort of brings you together more	15/536
Peter: If anything it's stronger	7/256
Terry: Yeah distance makes the heart grow fonder	4/119
Neil: The third one made our relationship stronger	15/544
Jack: ey it made the relationship stronger I think	7/254

Enabling and enhancement:	**Page/line**
Scott: I don't think I would have been in the position with my financial and um the ability to get somewhere to live...massively enhanced my relationship	19/679
Terry: It's a good life and I think the wives get used to it, it is a good life...social aspect, job security	9/295
Neil: Then decided to get married which gave us a military quarter so	1/23
I probably wouldn't have ventured out of my comfort zone...go and do my own thing and meet new people and had it not been for that then I probably of never met her	2/74

B: Challenges

Distance and separations:	**Page/line**
Scott: Yeah it's challenging but it's down to the distance	4/113
Peter: If you add up all the days it's probably about 30 days about a month, in a year, take all the weekends	5/159
Terry: Obviously challenges of being apart	3/66
Neil: Just because I missed them because I had my own y own little family, my wife and my daughter um I just missed them so much, like more than I'd ever think	14/517
Jack: Is no any bad points aside from not being able to see each other as much as you'd like	16/599

Re-adjusting post-deployment:	**Page/line**
Scott: Obviously I get told off quite a bit for making the house a mess again	15/554
Daniel: Yeah she moans at me...so many differences it's unbelievable just those things you get used to doing on your own thing around the house, or she gets used to her way	16/638
Terry: I think it would be harder when you come back because you'd be in your routine, as in I'd be in my own routine...my wife would be in her own routine that she got used to...and then you kind of have to slot back into that and try and get back into routine life and re-build routine	6/180
Neil: You want and think everything should be dropped for you, but you've got to slot in progressively...it's you fitting back into theirs you know...that's quite hard to get your head around	19/699
Jack: Just wee daft things like your sleep patterns are a bit funny...took only a few days to get over...I woke up at like half and wanted to talk to my missus and she made it clear she was not interested (laughs)	13/489

Culture of cheating wives:	**Page/line**
Peter: I know wives what, their husbands have been in Afghanistan and they've been in night clubs chatting up other blokes from different regiments...Pads estates, that's what tends that's what wives, once the husband is away the wives go out...you know don't like their husbands or whatever and they go out	7/258
Terry: Well there's many a story, many many story about um the old wives, when the guys used to be out on operations	18/462

Forced acceleration of relationships: **Page/line**

Terry: It's really just the fact that they fall out and I think that reverts back to them doing things too quickly too early without too much forethought 9/322

Neil: Then when I was posted I got posted um about 50 miles south um, we weren't it wasn't really serious at the time...we had to make a choice whether to just have a weekend relationship or make it serious which is what we did 1/17

C: Guilt

I might not make it back –"it's what you leave behind": **Page/line**

Daniel: You've got the uncertainty that comes into it, they see a name on or they see another soldier's been killed so it's just that uncertainty with the tours 19/663

Peter: I thought I can't die at Christmas...I'm not that bothered if I die I die but it's what you leave behind, that's what I am always worried about, if you die at Christmas every Christmas from now on is going to be tainted with your death, that's the hardest thing to get your head around 7/223

Terry: If I had come back in a body bag then it would have been distressing for them...then there's other people relying on me 5/155

Neil: Got told to go on Christmas leave then the regiment's deploying to Iraq for op TELIC 1 which no one really knew what was to expect, it was a war, it was the first war we'd had in like 10 years...so I got told enjoy your Christmas leave and don't make plans for the following year 6/201

Jack: I said don't panic until somebody comes to the door 8/275

Part time parent : **Page/line**

Peter: It got me the other day...my missus took her to the park with one of her mates...she told me and I was like started to get upset cos I should be taking her to the park, I should be there, what else am I going to miss, so it is hard 10/363

Neil: Oh look she took her first steps, brilliant, I kind of push it aside, but I really do care about that kind of thing...it is bad that I missed first steps, first words 14/496

Jack: One of my mates his wife's in Liverpool and he has a daughter...he was leaving one point and he said to her I'll be away for a while then I'll come back and she asked him if he was coming back for ever and he said that quite upset him 15/571

Daniel: He's (son) always "where's dad", "work", "okay" and he carries on....but I suppose it might be quite hard for him 16/550

Absence and abandoning: **Page/line**

Scott: I brought her down from XXXX and left her in Wiltshire and disappeared 7/242

Peter: Like missing her birthday and stuff like that and missing weddings and stuff you know 17/632

Neil: she's got a lot more to deal with back home, especially um as that was the first time she'd lived out of her home country 14/507

Upset and worry: **Page/line**

Daniel: You know what you are doing...all they're are doing is watching the news seeing right so one person is killed 8/293

Peter: Then she starts panicking and it makes you feel guilty 9/331

Terry: My parents said that they used to do 6 hour shifts watching teletext on the TV 15/548

Jack: my mum got quite upset when I went to Iraq the first time, I mean that's the one that sticks in my mind, she got really upset...she was obviously apprehensive about that and I think my dad and my brothers were too but they obviously handled it better 5/177

D: Alleviating guilt

Wife knew what she was getting into: **Page/line**

Scott: She met me coming in to this lifestyle so we were together 9 months and within that 9 months I spent 2 of them in Canada we got married, 3 months later I was in Iraq 15/558

Daniel: I think it's easier having a military wife cos she, there's lots of guys come in saying right okay she's moaning that we are here there and the other...not understanding the amount of work that we've got to put in 2/44

Peter: I think that's why I wanted to wait a long time to make sure she was happy and knew what she was getting herself into 6/200

Terry: I was fortunate because he father was in the military so she understands that you have to go out on exercise that you have to go away 2/37

Jack: I think probably having went away we diddly after meeting her she already knew that existed so it wasn't a shock to the system 9/329

Wife's strength and independence: **Page/line**

Scott: She's quite a strong women 2/48

Peter: If they're strong and got their own life 16/604

Neil: My wife's quite independent anyway 15/526

Jack: She keeps herself busy with her work and seeing her family and friends 7/250

She's supported and coping: **Page/line**

Scott: Meeting all the support and welfare teams that are available...making sure that my heavily pregnant wife knew everyone...the welfare team knew her position...quite a lot of support from that side 10/356

Daniel: Her mum and her family are just round the corner really so she's...just a 10/15 minute drive away really, so she's got those 6/222

Terry: There's loads of things organised for families...and the wives whose husbands are away they put on shopping trips 16/600

Neil: Loads of good friends and good community and they all looked after each other 15/528

Jack: I've got mates in work that are from close by where I am so their wives...although it's not as big there are still other people who understand which like..so they help each other out 10/376

It's my job – this is what I signed up for: **Page/line**

Scott: I've got a job to do and I'm there to do that job 20/728

Daniel: no not really just cos it's part of the job you go away do that an then you come back 11/377

Peter: I'm not upset I'm quite happy to be there, that's what I want to do...that's what I'm here for that's what I joined the Army for 21/778

Terry: it's you know you don't sign on the dotted line to stay at home and be a husband you sign on the dotted line to join the Army to go and travel and do all your bits and pieces 3/69

We prepare for deployment: **Page/line**

Daniel: There's nothing that we haven't already got in place 10/370

Terry: You get notice of when you're going so you can get ready and prepared and make them aware of what's going on 4/128

Jack: I think me having been away so many times before I was able to with my experience say these are, you know I might not be able to phone for a week or 8/281

I hide the reality from her – it would only make her worry more: **Page/line**

Daniel: If I had to tell her everything that had happened...she'd be panicking every time I went, cos she'd be more fretting...I play it down a lot so she's not worried when I go away 20/770

Peter: I didn't tell her much about the tour 19/708

Terry: You'd lie, and that's categorical because you wouldn't want them to worry 15/539

Jack: Not wanting to tell people certain things cos you always kind of dress it up a wee bit and say oh nothing we've not being doing anything 8/300

E: Dilemmas

Demands – Job versus wife:	**Page/line**
Scott: I've got a job to do and I'm there to do that job, so It might sound a little selfish but that's where for that period of time my main focus is getting through that tour, and the rest of we'll worry about when I'm home	20/728
Daniel: It's still the arguments every so often, work too late and all that sort of stuff	1/35
Peter: You can't just turn around and say no. If I get a phone call now saying you're working this weekend you've gotta do it	11/391
Terry: I mean it's a very high profile stretched job...I mean I saw lots of people move into the block move out of the block go back to their married quarters move back into the block, that's it is happens here as well	11/366
Neil: My mum kind of resents me cos I couldn't get home cos we were training	6/208
Jack: You know the unpredictability a lot of people don't like dealing with it, like sometimes you might have to at the last minute say that I can't come home cos I've got to do something at work	2/57

Military life/Wife-civilian life – "you've got to split it":	**Page/line**
Scott: When we first got married we lived behind the wire on the camp...it's another segregation...we are living off camp, so it brings a lot more normality into life...it's still military housing	2/55
Daniel: I did do (live on camp) then I bought a house I got a house down XXXXXX, um cos we had a child and a bit of stability for him we bought a place	1/3
I used to take too much work home but now I've split it that's why I moved the family down	4/111
Peter: When I'm here I'm very military and I'm in the Army but when I'm at home at the weekends I have nothing to do with the Army I don't even tell people I'm in the Army	22/816
Terry: yeah fully immersed, yeah fully immersed, umm, she's got a group of friends other wives, she's got a group of friends who are civilian of camp, and we've got a good work life balance	6/198

Neil: I had taken on the world you know what I mean so everything else was just insignificant so I remember quite often just thinking, just getting off the phone and thinking oh god how boring is she even arguing with her...yeah didn't appreciate what was happening outside of my little world and didn't really respect anything 11/382

Jack: We'd already decided not to move down so we decided to leave it...cos we've got a lot of family at home and that will be easier for her with the baby 1/21

Bravado versus true emotion: **Page/line**

Scott: Obviously there were times, teary times and miss you times and stuff, but um (said dismissively with sarcasm) 8/279

Daniel: Like a hole in the head (laughs) no he's fine (laughs)...I will miss them both...I missed them, I missed them both yeh 16/563

Peter: Oh I was petrified the first time I went out I was scared...but I never said to her 20/748

Neil: I kind of play the big man when it comes to "oh look she took her first steps"...I kind of push it aside but I really do care about that kind of thing...like yeah I'm not really bothered...but I'm trying to make her feel better you know what I mean if I like burst in to tears and oh I can't believe I'm missing all this, it would make me feel bad it would make her feel worse 14/496

"I had two lives" – Lad's life versus committed relationship: **Page/line**

Scott: Went through a stage...obvious being a soldier we done a lot of drinking...I'd stopped drinking...I'd stopped drinking before I met my wife 3/91

Peter: I weren't very committed to it I had my own, I had two lives 3/75

Then a lot of people go out and get drunk and pick up and cheat on their wives...it's more the social aspect that breaks up the marriages 14/506

Neil: At first it's not really take seriously by others, we didn't take it seriously to be honest with you, we did our own thing during the week and then 2/50

Jack: It was quite enjoyable you get to get to go to all these interesting places...without having to, it probably sounds a bit selfish but you can afford to be when you are single because you've not got anybody back home so you can if you spend a lot of money on a night out you're not taking away money from a house back home...I really enjoyed it 4/116

<u>E: Maturity, promotion, readiness and the natural progression to commitment:</u>

Page/line

Daniel: I left it I was still having fun, late 20's 13/471

Peter: It wasn't until about a year, a year into the relationship that I actually started thinking about settling down and growing up a bit...yeah a lot of the lads don't really settle down until when you start getting to lance sergeant and sergeant that's when you start making a family...it's not until you start getting older and start settling down 3/79

Terry: When I did get into a relationship I'd been promoted to corporal 5/144

It’s just a natural progression isn’t it really, when you get to that age

17/628

Neil: It’s just natural progression through age, rank, um, especially rank in the military and then with that comes family 25/937

Jack: It’s just kind of natural progression when you meet the right person you just er your priorities change a bit, I think meeting my wife when I was a little bit older... 4/127